

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

The war: debate, analysis & argument

Iraqi exiles say 'Bombing will not bring us liberation'
George Galloway MP on the war and New Labour
Tariq Ali on the power of protest

An eight-page special section—see centre pages

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in Latin
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suffering on
the streets
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BUSH AND
BLAIR USE
BRIBES
AND LIES

STOP
THEIR
COUNTDOWN
TO SLAUGHTER

ORGANISE, PROTEST & DEMONSTRATE



Picture: MATT SAYWELL

PROTEST: at London embassy

Free Egyptian activists

ARRESTED FOR no reason, “disappeared” off the streets, held without trial and tortured.

That is the fate of peace protesters in Egypt, a key ally of the US and Britain in the Middle East.

Protests took place in London, Washington, Warsaw and Beirut on Monday in solidarity with at least 14 people rounded up by the regime of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

Eleven Egyptian activists remain in custody. Nearly all have been tortured.

This is the country where Tony

Blair has twice taken his Christmas holidays—one of them paid for by the Mubarak regime.

The arrests began after an anti-war protest in January.

Then last week officers of the State Security Intelligence (SSI) seized Kermal Khalil, one of the leaders of the anti-war movement in Egypt, only days after he underwent a major operation. Amnesty International has formally taken up his case.

Wa’el Khalil, a spokesperson for the detainees, says, “We know that many of those kidnapped by

the SSI have been tortured with great brutality. We are especially worried about Kemal and fear he may not survive ill-treatment.”

The others still in custody are Sabri Al Sammak, Ibrahim Al Sahari, Tamer Hindawi, Abdel Gawad Ahmed, Mohammed Khalil, Samir Al Foli, Magdi Al Kordi, Mahmoud Hassan, Mohammed Dakli, and Mohammed Hosni.

The British Stop the War Coalition says, “If Bush and Blair were serious about democracy they would protest now.”

“They have said nothing.

Meanwhile the Mubarak government in Egypt continues to receive massive aid.”

■ **For further information, or to register support, e-mail Jonathan Neale of the International Campaign Against US Aggression on Iraq at findjonathan@hotmail.com or phone 07986 220 641.**

■ **Send messages of protest to President Hosni Mubarak, president of the Arab Republic of Egypt, by e-mailing webmaster@presidency.gov.eg and to General Habib al-Adeli at the Ministry of the Interior at moi@idsc.gov.eg**

SMILES: Mubarak and Blair

Picture: PA PHOTOS

Stamp on unions

NEW LABOUR was poised to cave in to the bosses and stamp on any extension of rights for trade unionists this week.

Union leaders had been hoping a new white paper would include the right to strike without fear of getting sacked.

Legal strikers can currently be sacked after eight weeks.

The TUC’s assessment was “disappointment that the government has not moved

on the major issues.

“Fundamental changes are needed to eliminate some serious shortcomings in the legislation.”

Employment relations minister Alan Johnson said last week he will not grant those working in companies with fewer than 21 workers the right to hold a union recognition ballot.

The bosses’ club, the CBI, said it was encouraged by leaked news of the white paper last week.

Levy more fees

NINE OUT of ten universities plan to charge the maximum £3,000 a year top-up fees from 2006, trashing the idea that poorer students could choose a less expensive course.

This was always going to happen once education secretary Charles Clarke announced he wanted a “fundamentally market-based system”.

None of the universities want to be branded as “cheap”. Clarke has already said

the new grant, limited to a few of the poorest students, could be abolished within two years of being introduced next year.

In the US 16 out of 50 states have increased their tuition costs by more than 10 percent, according to the *College Affordability in Jeopardy* report. It argues that huge numbers of Americans are being priced out of higher education.

Divide the NHS

HEALTH secretary Alan Milburn wants to increase the number of foundation hospitals to 50.

Foundation hospitals are about imposing two-tier healthcare.

These hospitals will get extra resources, privileges and be able to poach staff from the rest.

Milburn’s latest target of 50 hospitals is four times the

number first suggested by the Department of Health.

The strategy is the cause of serious tension inside Blair’s cabinet.

But the debate is only over how fully the process should go ahead, not whether there should be elite hospitals in the first place.

Milburn admitted recently that some of his plans were “a huge lottery”.

THREATS, bullying and bribery are the methods the US and Britain have turned to to get a United Nations resolution for war on Iraq.

Bush and Blair need nine votes out of the 15 members of the Security Council to get the resolution passed.

They also have to make sure that none of the five permanent members of the council (the US, Britain, China, Russia and France) uses their veto.

The war is so unpopular that every government is under strong pressure not to back it.

So the US and Britain are offering blood money to enter what they call the “coalition of the willing”. It should be called the coalition of the killing.

The *Guardian* says, “Russia and China are putting their power of veto up for sale in the form of debt write-offs and promises of a share of the action in post-war oil contracts.”

The ten other countries on the Security Council face a blizzard of threats and sweeteners.

One US official says that although there were no direct economic threats “that’s not to say that countries are not aware that we provide them with assistance”.

For Mexico the payoff for a yes vote would be easing of US immigration barriers to Mexicans.

For Bulgaria a pro-US vote has been made much more likely by promises of help with entry into the

‘It should be called the coalition of the killing’

European Union and co-operation with NATO.

Bulgaria is set to receive over \$31 million in US military grants and nearly \$100 million from another fund.

Chile’s biggest fear is that a no vote could halt a trade agreement.

The US has left the African countries Angola, Guinea and Cameroon in no doubt that aid will be cut off if they don’t jump into line.

It is no idle threat. Yemen lost a \$70 million aid programme when it voted against the 1991 Gulf War.

If the US can get the nine votes but the resolution is vetoed, Bush will claim he has the “moral majority” on his side.

This is not an argument he uses about Israel.

The last Security Council motion against Israel (for killing UN humanitarian workers) had 14 votes in favour but was vetoed by the US.



Stuffed with cash

THE US has already spectacularly bought support in Turkey where Bush’s men offered \$26 billion in grants, loans and loan guarantees.

At the start of this week the Turkish government said it would recommend to parliament that US troops be allowed to enter the country.

The US military has dispatched the 4th

Infantry Division, which plans to base 15,000 troops in Turkey as the launch point for a potential invasion of northern Iraq.

The Turkish foreign minister has said he wants US guarantees that the Iraqi Kurds would not be allowed to “declare independence” and that US forces would take control of the oil cities of Kirkuk and Mosul.

He added that there was a danger that if the refugees returned to these cities, the Kurds might seize Iraq’s northern oilfields.

The US and Britain are perfectly prepared to let Turkey crush Kurdish resistance.

Turkish general Yasar Buyukyanit has proposed reintroducing military rule in six largely Kurdish provinces in Turkey.

What about HIS missiles?

THE US and Britain claimed this week that Iraq has missed its “last chance” to disarm.

They have also tried to make a big incident out of the possibility that one class of Iraqi missiles, known as Al Samoud, could possibly fly up to 180 kilometres.

This is not even far enough to go from Baghdad in central Iraq to Basra in the south.

Whatever the Iraqi regime’s arsenal, it pales to nothing in comparison with the Israeli stockpiles, especially as Israel definitely does have nuclear weaponry.

Israel’s Jericho I ballistic missile has a range of 500

kilometres. The Jericho II is even more deadly. Its range of 1,500 kilometres means it can hit targets in Iraq, Syria, Iran and even Russia.

It can carry a payload of 1,000 kilograms, more than enough for a nuclear weapon.

Bush and Blair do not want to “rid the region of weapons of mass destruction”. They just want to make Iraq defenceless.

With the US and Britain openly preparing for a massive attack against Iraq, the Iraqi leaders are told they must immediately destroy any weaponry that might get in the way of a quick US victory.

ISRAELI PRIME minister Ariel Sharon

Picture: PA PHOTOS

War on Iraq... Firefighters...

WHERE IS NEW LABOUR GOING?

Speakers:

George Galloway MP

Bob Crow

(RMT general secretary)

Christine Blower

(Former NUT president)

Mark Serwotka

(PCS general secretary)

John Rees

(Socialist Alliance)

Linda Smith

(London region FBU treasurer)

*personal capacity

MONDAY 3 MARCH
Friends Meeting House
Euston Road, London 7.30pm

Socialist Worker

Editorial: 020 7538 0828

Circulation and

business:

020 7538 3305

National office:

020 7538 5821

Industrial Department:

020 7987 1919

All correspondence

to PO Box 82,

London E3 3LH

Published weekly except

final week of December.

Published and printed

by Larkham Printers and

Publishers Ltd

(TU all departments)

■ Registered as a newspaper

with the Royal Mail

Socialist Worker is on the internet at www.socialistworker.co.uk

Dictators of war ignore the masses

BUSH AND Blair are desperately seeking new ways to justify their slaughter in Iraq.

They have now resorted to claiming they want to bomb Iraq into freedom and democracy.

They've got a nerve talking about democracy. They are ignoring the millions across the world who marched on 15 February against war.

Bush and Blair's coalition of the countries willing to wage war is completely undemocratic.

Britain: Over 55 percent of British people oppose war, and two million marched through London against it.

Blair is so terrified of dissent he won't even let his tame parliament, in which his party has a 167-seat majority, have a proper vote on the war.

US: Opinion polls suggest that enthusiasm for war is on the decline, while anti-war feeling is growing. Some 500,000 joined the anti-war protest in New York despite being banned from marching.

Bush may claim he has majority support in the US for war, but he has had to pour out lies and propaganda to get it.

He cannot boast that he himself was democratically elected. He lost the US presidential election.

Bush was appointed president by Supreme Court judges who were themselves appointed by his father, George Bush Sr.

Spain: Upwards of 80 percent of people in Spain are opposed to the war their prime minister, Aznar, is so keen on.

An estimated 10 percent of the entire Spanish population, over four million people, marched against war on 15 February.

Aznar hardly comes from a background proud of its democratic traditions.

He began his political career in the National Movement, the political organisation set up by Spanish dictator, the fascist General Franco.

Italy: Opinion polls show that around 80 percent of people in Italy are against an attack on Iraq.

Over three million marched against war in Rome. Deputy prime minister Gianfranco

Finì accused them of "totalitarian pacifism".

Finì has described the fascist dictator Mussolini as "the greatest statesman of the century". Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's prime minister, gave Finì the job as his deputy.

Australia: Some 75 percent of people in Australia are against war on Iraq, according to opinion polls.

Around 500,000 joined anti-war marches on 15 February. Yet Australian Tory prime minister John Howard attacked them for "giving comfort" to Saddam Hussein.

He is cheering Bush on and has sent more than 10,000 Australian troops to the Gulf.

These dictators of war do not represent the wishes of the people. To make them listen we have to mobilise, protest and take to the streets again and again.

No time to lose

A WAR could start in just two weeks time. We don't have a moment to lose.

Every day is a chance to build the anti-war forces that pile the pressure on Blair.

He has already been shaken by our protests. We need to go further.

We need to organise the most effective types of direct action against the war machine.

Train drivers in Motherwell were an inspiration to the anti-war movement when they refused to move munitions trains.

Now their actions are being taken up on a much bigger and more significant scale by Italian rail workers (see picture, right).

Listed below are just a few of the activities set up for the next few days across Britain. This weekend campaigners were set to lobby their Labour MPs. More local demonstrations are being planned.

And across the country people are preparing for mass protests and walkouts if Bush and Blair unleash war.

In every workplace and college and on every street there are scores of people eager to throw themselves into organising against the war.

We urge all *Socialist Worker* readers to put themselves at the heart of building the anti-war movement.

Italy: arms train halted



ANTI-WAR rail workers and activists in Italy have been holding protests to stop weapons trains. Tom Behan told *Socialist Worker*, "Action is centred on the US military base Camp Darby, just outside Florence. Activists have identified goods trains carrying military equipment and have delayed their movement throughout Italy. Rail workers are putting up posters in the relevant stations warning passengers that war material is being carried on the same lines as passengers. The Americans have admitted to having serious problems in moving equipment. Any war material for the Gulf would have to go through Genoa or Livorno ports. Both Roberto Piccini, president of the Livorno dockers' association, and Guido Abbadesse, national secretary of the CGIL union's transport section, have spoken out against the movement of military equipment."

ANTI-WAR EVENTS

Friday 28 February

Swansea

Lobby of the Welsh Labour Party conference, 12 noon to 2pm, Guildhall, Swansea. Called by Swansea Coalition Against War. Supported by Stop the War Coalition, Muslim Association of Britain and CND Cymru.

Saturday 1 March

Southport

Lobby of North West Labour Party conference, 9am-11am, Floral Hall, Promenade, Southport.

Birmingham

Demonstration, assemble 1pm, Centenary Square.

Swindon

Demonstration, assemble 12 noon, Cenotaph, Regent Circus.

Wednesday 5 March

Across Britain

Anti-war day of occupations and national school strike, protests and meetings for university, college and FE students.

London

Demo called by School Students Stop the War Coalition, 1pm, Parliament Square, London.

Thursday 6 March

Edinburgh

Demonstration to the Scottish Parliament, assemble 4pm at either Bristo Square or the US Consulate on Regent Terrace. Called by Edinburgh Stop the War Coalition.

Saturday 8 March

Manchester

Demonstration, assemble 1pm: All Saints Park, Oxford Rd; Salford Crescent, outside university; and Heywood St, Cheetham Hill. Rally and festival, 3pm, Albert Square.

Sheffield

Demonstration, assemble 11am at local sites and then 12 noon at Barkers Pool (outside City Hall).

Nottingham

Demonstration, assemble 12 noon, Forest Recreation Ground, march to Market Square.

Barnsley

Demonstration, assemble 10.30am, Churchfields.

Across Britain

International Women's Day events.

People's assembly for peace

Wednesday 12 March, Westminster Central Hall, London

Contact the coalition for details

"We want to let democracy flourish and to give a voice to those who are deeply frustrated by the way that anti-war feeling is strangled in official politics.

"We hope that anti-war groups and areas will hold meetings and elect delegates to represent them at the assembly. We also want trade unions, faith groups and others to send delegates.

"It would be wonderful if the assembly looked like a representative selection of the march on 15 February. We would like the assembly to reflect the breadth, energy and imagination of the whole movement."

LINDSEY GERMAN, convenor of the Stop the War Coalition



Stop the War Coalition—phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk

comment

The horizon is expanding

WHEN AN establishment paper like the *New York Times* reacts to the anti-war protests on 15 February by commenting that “there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion”, you know things are beginning to move.

The funny thing is that not everyone on the left is happy with the explosive growth of the anti-war movement. The radical American academic Michael Hardt has become a very prominent figure thanks to his co-authorship, with Toni Negri, of *Empire*.

Whatever its faults, *Empire* did champion the revolt of what Hardt and Negri call the “multitude” against the present phase of capitalist globalisation. It was therefore surprising to find Hardt writing in the *Guardian* last week:

“The coordinated protests last weekend against the war were animated by various kinds of anti-Americanism. This tends to close down the horizons of our political imagination.

“The globalisation protest movements were far superior to the anti-war movements.

‘Plural’

“They not only recognised the complex and plural nature of the forces that dominate capitalist globalisation today but they imagined an alternative, democratic globalisation consisting of plural exchanges across national and regional borders based on equality and freedom.”

This is bizarre. It is a pro-war propaganda cliché that the peace protests are “anti-American”.

They are certainly against George Bush, and fear of the United States is widespread.

But none of this is the same as hating the American people or even American culture.

Hardt, like me, attended the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre in Brazil a month ago. Hostility to “Yankee imperialism” is very widespread in Latin America.

But I was struck by the enthusiasm with which audiences at Porto Alegre greeted the growing evidence of the development of a strong anti-war movement in the US.

They clearly understood how important it is that Bush is challenged on his home ground.

As for the anti-war movement being nationalist—doesn’t the fact that 15 February was the greatest day of *international* protest in world history suggest a certain flaw in Hardt’s reasoning?

The idea that the emergence of the anti-war movement has harmed the struggle against capitalist globalisation is something that is more usually associated with the right wing of the anti-globalisation movement.

Bernard Cassen, leader of ATTAC, the French-based campaign against financial speculation, has expressed

ALEX CALLINICOS on how anti-war protests are strengthening resistance

this view.

Hardt has derided Cassen for hoping to use the nation-state to tame capitalism. Now he is siding with him on the critical issue of the war.

The truth is that 11 September could easily have completely destroyed the movement against global capitalism. This is certainly what big business hoped.

The reason why it didn’t was that many of the activists who had built the movement in Europe threw themselves into mobilising against the war. This was particularly true in Italy and Britain.

Here the same networks that had built the protests against the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001 pushed for the first major anti-war demonstrations that autumn.

For many of those involved this reflected a deeper understanding of the complexities of global capitalism than Hardt has displayed.

Teeth

They grasped that globalisation was about more than investment and trade—that it was also about military competition and geopolitical domination.

Hardt is quite wrong to say, “It is unfortunate but inevitable that much of the energies that had been active in the globalisation protests have now at least temporarily redirected against the war.”

War isn’t a temporary distraction. Global capitalism comes divided into nation-states and armed to the teeth.

The anti-capitalist movement has developed into a movement that is also against imperialism and war.

This has greatly broadened the support of the movement, but it has also led to a deepening radicalisation.

Those who, like Hardt and Cassen, resist this process show that they are stuck at an earlier stage of the history of the movement against capitalist globalisation. If they don’t wake up, they will be left behind.

inside the system

Justice beheaded

PAUL KELLEHER became a national hero when he decapitated a statue of Margaret Thatcher.

Paul admitted giving Thatcher the chop with a cricket bat, but the jury at his first trial couldn’t decide whether he had a “lawful excuse”.

Judge George Bathurst Norman presided over the retrial.

He sent Paul down for three months.

Judge Bathurst Norman has featured in *Socialist Worker* before—when he jailed a young anti-capitalist protester in 1999.

He also presided over the trial of Vincent Bethell, a veteran nudist. When the jury found the nudist not guilty Bethell shouted in triumph, “Being human is not a crime!”

Our judge responded, “I would not go away too much with that idea.”

■ To send messages of support to Paul go to www.petitiononline.com/pkvsmt/petition

★ CHARITIES for the elderly were furious after the government dropped minimum standards for single rooms, lifts and baths for care homes.

Health minister Jacqui Smith announced that standards would be “relaxed” for homes set up in business before April 2002.

The charity Help the Aged was “appalled” by the government backtracking.

Silent witness

MOUNIR AL-Motassadeq was sentenced to 15 years in jail by a German court last week for being an accessory to the hijackers on 11 September 2001.

Some remarkable aspects of this case have gone virtually unreported.

Two key defence witnesses could not be called at the trial. Both have also been arrested, one by the US and one by Morocco.

Legal requests to bring the two men to court were denied. The US Department of Justice simply refused to explain its decision.

Think what I say

INSIDE THE System reported last week on the launch of a Researchers Against the War group set up by Labour Party research staff.

Steve McCabe, the Labour MP for Birmingham Hall Green, has greeted the group in a way that will undoubtedly warm the heart of Tony Blair.

McCabe is ready to sack any researcher who, during their work time, raises doubts about

So that’s why they call it Bush House

WHAT IS going on at BBC headquarters, Bush House?

Two World Service journalists were sacked last week. Adli Hawwari is a Palestinian. Abdul-Hadi Jiad is an Iraqi.

John Fray, the deputy general secretary of the journalists’ union the NUJ, accused the BBC bosses of “the ultimate betrayal of free speech”.

He said, “The BBC has laid itself open to accusations of the World Service being lackeys of the government.

“Is it a coincidence that two Arabic service journalists are sacked when a war over Iraq is on the horizon?”

The government pays for the World Service with a grant given by the Foreign Office.

BBC bosses have also instructed staff to censor the anti-war movement.

BBC news boss Richard Sambrook sent an e-mail telling staff to keep anti-war “extremists” off the airwaves, however representative their views are.

Journalist Paul Foot said, “It helps to explain why BBC news presenters—the Gavin Eslers and Mark Urbans—vigorously defend the warmongers.”

Longstanding guidelines banning BBC journalists from attending demos are now being enforced.

The absurdity of the BBC’s pro-war stance was revealed when 1950s comedy play, *The Mouse that Roared*, was banned from Radio 4.

The play is about a small country in the Alps declaring war on the US. BBC managers feared it could be interpreted as anti-American.



Snipers OK'd by US

COULD THE Israeli military soon be carrying out assassinations “legally” in countries across the world including the US?

Since November 2000 Israel has conducted 85 executions of individual Palestinian activists inside Israel’s borders.

The government calls these “targeted killings”.

Such “targeted killings”, often carried out with helicopter-borne missiles, have claimed the lives of bystanders, often including children.

A few weeks ago *Forward*, a venerable New York based Jewish weekly, reported that US

and Israeli legal experts met recently to discuss ways to justify the legality of assassination.

Several weeks earlier, on January 15, journalist Richard Sale quoted multiple Israeli and US official sources stating that Mossad has been given permission to carry out “targeted killings” on the soil of friendly countries, including the US.

The Bush administration has declined to comment on the reported expansion of Israel’s assassination policy.

LOGGING ON 4 LAUGHS

THE ANTI-war movement has encouraged people to launch a series of satirical and angry websites against Bush and Blair. You might enjoy these:

- <http://www.seven.co.nz/quicktime/video.html>
- <http://www.coxar.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>
- <http://www.webdesignlab.co.uk/niksthings/masking.html>
- <http://www.idleworm.com/nws/2002/11/iraq2.shtml>
- <http://www.stopesso.com/funstuff/nose.html>

THINGS THEY SAY

“DEAFENING Silence As Immigrant Tide Rises.”

■ DAILY MAIL, 21 February, page 14

“THE MAIL salutes the achievement of Asian pupils, now poised to outperform their white classmates in this year’s GCSE exams. Their performance provides testimony to the benefits of traditional values. It is a lesson that indigenous Britain would do well to learn.”

■ DAILY MAIL, 21 February, page 12

“WE KNOW where the best oil reserves are in Iraq and we covet the opportunity to get them.”

■ ARCHIE DUNHAM, chairman of ConocoPhillips

“IF YOU have a college Lib Dem group in your area this will be an excellent source of candidates—not just for those who are party members, but their friends and flatmates will be persuaded to stand ‘for a laugh’ and for the price of a round of drinks.”

■ Lib Dem chief of staff DR DEREK BARRIE on getting election candidates

“ALL reporters preparing package scripts must submit scripts for approval. Packages may not be edited until scripts are approved. All packages originating outside Washington, Los Angeles or New York must come to Atlanta for approval.”

■ Instructions to reporters from US TV station CNN in preparation for war

“THE CAMPAIGN to end inheritance tax demonstrates so clearly the power of money. Money and power are very closely related in this country.”

■ BILL GATES SENIOR, father of the Microsoft billionaire

Seconds from a disaster

A CATASTROPHIC train crash was prevented by sheer luck near Southall station, where seven passengers died in a collision in 1997 and near where 31 people died in the Paddington disaster in 2000.

An intercity express came off the tracks in west London at 120 mph last November.

A crash was only stopped because an abandoned piece of rail was lying near the track, accident investigators heard last week.

It would have smashed into an incoming train had not the length of rail kept it away from the other line.

If the coach had been able to move it would have been a catastrophe.

★ STANFORD University in the US has just received \$100 million to carry out “climate change studies”. The money comes from oil giant ExxonMobil.

DO YOU have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

Socialist Review

FACING DOWN THE EVIL EMPIRE

Special issue How mass action can stop the war

Mike Haynes analyses the roots of war
Labour activists speak out
Mike Davis on Greenland’s anti-war movement

OUR ANSWER TO TONY BLAIR'S QUESTION

What would you do to free the Iraqis?

WAR IS the only way to remove Iraq's brutal dictator, says Tony Blair. His claim is echoed by commentators such as David Aaronovitch, Christopher Hitchens and Nick Cohen.

Blair puts to one side the fact that the West hoisted the brutal Iraqi dictator into power.

Instead he issues what he thinks is an impossible challenge to the anti-war movement—who else can liberate the people of Iraq?

The answer is the people of Iraq themselves, a force which Blair scorns.

There are many examples of regimes every bit as repressive as Iraq's falling to popular revolt.

In December 1989 revolution swept Romania and toppled its ruler, Nicolae Ceausescu.

Romania was one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world. Ceausescu had a massive secret police—the Securitate. He ran a one-party state. Opponents were imprisoned, tortured and killed.

Popular opposition was smashed off the streets. In 1987, for example, the army ringed the city of Brasov, where there was a major strike, and opened fire killing hundreds of workers.

No one felt able to speak freely even to neighbours and friends for fear they would be reported to the authorities.

But a big strike at the end of 1989 triggered an uprising which Ceausescu was unable to crush.

Revolt

The revolt reached the capital, Bucharest, when Ceausescu called a pro-government rally. Viorica Butnariu, a student, was there and recalled:

“We were ordered to go to the rally. This time when the president began to talk, somebody from the first rows shouted, ‘Down with Ceausescu!’ Suddenly people dropped all the portraits and began to shout, ‘Down with Ceausescu!’”

Troops opened fire killing hundreds, but the protests spread across the city. As hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets soldiers refused to open fire.

As with many other examples, the fear of repression evaporated almost overnight. A seemingly impregnable and utterly ruthless regime fell to pieces in a few hours.

Ceausescu fled by helicopter from the presidential palace. He was captured and executed five days later.

The Romanian Revolution was the most dramatic of a wave of uprisings that ended totalitarian rule throughout Eastern Europe.

The people themselves, not Western bombs, overthrew their rulers.

Right wing politicians and papers in the West had for decades said “Better dead

‘The Romanian Revolution was the most dramatic of a wave of uprisings that ended totalitarian rule throughout Eastern Europe’

than red”, claiming that the only hope of freeing the people of Eastern Europe lay in Western military might.

Revolt has toppled Western-backed dictators too. In 1998 US-backed dictator General Suharto of Indonesia was overthrown.

Students and workers took to the streets, defying secret police, thugs loyal to the regime and the army.

Suharto was as brutal as Saddam Hussein. His forces killed between 750,000 and one million people in the CIA-backed coup that brought him to power in 1966.

Suharto's invasion and occupation of East Timor led to the deaths of over 200,000 people in the tiny country—one in three of the population. The invasion was supported by the US.

Despite control of the army and US support, Suharto fell.

We want revolt from below to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

KEVIN OVENDEN

REVOLT FROM below tore down the repressive Romanian regime in 1989

Regimes cracked in hours

of many run by Savak.

Even the fall of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, held up by the warmongers today as an example of what Western bombs can achieve, in fact shows the opposite.

Spring

The NATO bombing campaign in the spring of 1999 against Serbia shattered the internal opposition to Milosevic, who had only a few years earlier faced nightly demonstrations of tens of thousands of people calling on him to go.

He was then able to strengthen his position by appearing to stand up to NATO aggression.

Many commentators in the West despaired of ordinary Serbs rising up. One, Michael Ignatieff, bordered on racism when he said that the Serbs as a whole were morally unfit to run their country.

The bombing stopped. Milosevic held on. Then a year and a half later a strike by miners turned into a popular uprising.

One million people stormed the parliament building.

Milosevic was finished. In Iraq today the US and Britain do not want to see a popular democratic insurrection. They want to replace Saddam Hussein and the pinnacle of the regime with people who will be favourable to them.

Dictator loved by the US

SOME OF the worst dictators in the former Eastern bloc managed to hold on to power.

One such survivor is Islam Karimov, president of the Central Asian state of Uzbekistan.

Clare Short, international development minister, is due to meet him soon when the annual conference of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development is held there.

“Uzbekistan is distinguished by human rights abuses on an epic scale,” writes Steve Crawshaw, London director of Human Rights Watch, in a recent article.

“A United Nations special rapporteur talked of the ‘systemic torture’ that he found. The British ambassador rightly notes that ‘brutality is inherent’ in the government.

“*Police in Uzbekistan use electric shock, beatings and rape to compel confessions.*

“They asphyxiate detainees with plastic bags, sprinkle chlorine in gas masks and shut off the air.

“In basement cells they hang men naked by their wrists and ankles. In one case last year doctors found that burns on the body of a prisoner who died in custody were caused by immersion in boiling water. The hands had no fingernails.”

There are thousands of political prisoners in Uzbekistan.

The press here had a field day when Saddam Hussein claimed he won a recent election for president with nearly 100 percent of the vote.

Uzbekistan's president Karimov claimed he won a referendum in 1999 extending his term of office with 99.6 percent of the vote.

None of this bothers the US and Britain. Since the Afghan War the US has established permanent military bases in Uzbekistan.

They give the US a presence south of Russia, west of China, and in the middle of a strategically vital area which also sits on oil, gas and other resources.

So we don't hear much about liberating the people of Uzbekistan or of neighbouring Turkmenistan or of any of the other Central Asian states that are still run by the old Stalinist bureaucracies but are now in the US orbit.

RUMSFELD AND dictator Karimov enjoying each other's company in 2001



THE CWU union in Yorkshire has a proud tradition of fighting fascism

Picture: RAY SMITH

Movement inspired us to challenge the Nazi BNP

MANY PEOPLE in Yorkshire are concerned that Nick Cass, a Nazi BNP member, is working at Dewsbury delivery office. He, like me, is a member of the postal workers' CWU union. He stood for the BNP in last year's council elections, winning a high vote. He will be standing again in the upcoming elections. The local press is treating Cass as if he were a respectable politician. This is extremely dangerous.

The BNP is based on dividing black and white people. It stands in the Nazi tradition of using democracy to overthrow democracy.

One of the first things Hitler did when he came to power was get rid of trade unions. The BNP is

anti working class and anti-union.

We have told the national union about Cass but so far nothing has happened.

The union has a position that fascists should be kicked out of the union.

We leafleted Dewsbury post office for the first time last week to make our presence known, and to let people know that we can do something to get some unity back.

The leaflet showed what the BNP stands for—racism and violence.

Some people looked nervous and worried, but we got a good reception from the vast majority.

After we had finished leafleting I went into the office and got to meet the union rep. He took some

leaflets away and put them on the union noticeboard.

For me, the big thing wasn't just doing it from the outside. It sends a message to the BNP that anti-racists can go right into Dewsbury post office and challenge them.

It gives confidence to people inside the office who felt they had to keep their head down.

I can't believe I had the confidence to just walk into the office! It was the fantastic unity and the great atmosphere of last week's anti-war demonstration that inspired me.

An anti-war activist, who was also buoyed up by the march, helped me leaflet the office.

The BNP wants to add Dewsbury to its seats in Burnley,

Blackburn and Halifax.

We will get people together to stop it spreading hate.

Jason White

CWU safety rep at Huddersfield delivery office (personal capacity)

●WE WOULD like your assistance with a new campaign.

Employers withhold passports from around 63 percent of domestic migrant workers. This is illegal in the UK.

Kalayaan, the justice for overseas domestic workers campaign, have produced a statement which we are asking organisations to sign.

Phone 020 7243 2942 or e-mail kalayaanuk@aol.com

Kalayaan
West London

Failed coup has opened up society

HAVING JUST returned from a visit to Venezuela, it was good to see last week's article in *Socialist Worker*.

The media in Venezuela have been bombarding the nation with vile attacks on the president, Chavez. The mass of the population clearly did not identify with this.

Land reform, expansion of primary education and free healthcare together with a subsidised food distribution scheme have made life a little better under the present government.

Sabotage of industry by management led to the crippling of the oil industry and distribution of petrol, cooking gas and water.

None of this subdued the population who, on 25 January, took part in a three million strong march in support of Chavez in the capital, Caracas.

The workers have restored the necessary supplies. Having managed without managers for two months there are great debates taking place.

There is a grappling with new forms of organisation. This will lead to further clashes with the opposition and those in government who fear the development of an independent workers' movement.

John Davies
Leeds

15 Feb has lit a new fire in me

THE ANTI-WAR march in London on 15 February was one of the most positive and life affirming things I have ever experienced.

I marched for four hours with a ridiculous grin on my face.

No one who was there forgot for a second why they marched.

I was there because I think that (aside from the humanitarian viewpoint) what is happening is simply undemocratic.

So was it such a big deal that I marched, and so many others that have

never done anything like this before were there? I think it's a huge deal.

To my shame I haven't cared enough for ten years to even vote.

At last I've been given a spark of inner fire and I want *them* to listen to *us*.

From now on I will march for what I believe in, and I will use the march of 15 February 2003 as a point of reference for a new personal era of political awareness.

I doubt very much that I am alone.

Derick
by e-mail

Victims of war

WHENEVER Western leaders want to convince us that Saddam Hussein is evil they remind us that he has oppressed the Kurdish minority in his country.

But why is there no concern about the oppression of the Kurds in Turkey?

The Kurds will be caught right in the middle in this war.

If Turkey is given control of oil-rich northern Iraq as a reward for assisting the West it will not be a reason for great hope for the Kurdish people.

We fear that whatever Turkey does to the Kurds will be met with silence from Bush and Blair.

Angela Sibley
Hackney Teachers Association

YOUR VIEW ●●●

War is wrong even with UN

THE BIG anti-war demonstrations were brilliant.

One thing that bothers me is the United Nations (UN) business.

If nation-states succumb to US threats and bullying, or if Hans Blix and his team find evidence to justify the UN passing a resolution we must still oppose war.

It's wonderful to be on the same side as opinion formers like the *Daily Mirror*, but we mustn't get carried away.

We must say loudly and clearly that we'll oppose any attack on Iraq no matter what is decided by the UN.

Colin Yates
East London

Police attacked peaceful protest

I ATTENDED a 3,000-strong anti-war demonstration in Colorado Springs in the US on 15 February.

Some 50 percent of the people who live there have a military connection.

Many cars hooted in solidarity with the protesters, and very few showed any opposition. The march was very good-natured.

But riot police fired teargas and at least one plastic bullet, and arrested demonstrators.

In a weekend when millions demonstrated across the globe it is ironic that the only force used was by the US police against people exercising their right to free speech in a supposedly democratic regime.

Karen Evans
Denver, Colorado

A site for very sore eyes

THERE IS a very useful website for everyone who wants to see pictures of the demonstrations on 15 February from around the world.

People should go to www.punchdown.org/rvb/F15



Ramallah in Palestine

They show the breadth and dynamism of the movement in a way that no newspaper could.

Peter David
by e-mail

System dumps former servants

THE *SOCIALIST Worker* issue for the stop the war march was excellent.

I was particularly interested in ex-soldier Barry Donnan's article, which showed how the capitalist system abandons people when they have, in the ruling class's eyes, served their usefulness.

It is disgraceful that the British state refuses to acknowledge the existence of Gulf War syndrome and provide suitable support for Barry and thousands of other soldiers.

David Deakin
West London

I hope march made Blair sick

THE ANTI-WAR march was amazing. I've never seen more people in my life.



Rosie on the march

It shows the overwhelming majority of this country, and other countries, are against war.

I bet Tony Blair is feeling sick now.

Rosie Phillips (age 11)

Manchester

Is pro-war hack listening to us?

I WROTE to Nick Cohen of the *Observer* (N.Cohen@guardian.co.uk) after reading his recent article "The Left Isn't Listening", which was in support of bombing Iraq.

I asked, "What would you say would be an acceptable number of Iraqi deaths to remove the current regime?"

I got a reply ducking the question.

I wrote back and asked the question again. Cohen blocked my sending any further e-mails to him.

I then tried an alternative e-mail account but didn't get a response.

I can only assume Nick Cohen isn't listening.

Humayun Mirza
Luton

Mistakes could be punished

CONTRARY TO your article (*Socialist Worker*, 15 February) Hans von Sponeck was never a UN weapons inspector. He was an assistant general secretary of the UN with responsibility for administering the oil for food programme.

He resigned in protest at the blocking of aid by the US and UK. You may be confusing him with former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter.

It's this sort of mistake opponents will pick on to discredit everything else.

Dave Willcock
by e-mail

inside		
GEORGE GALLOWAY MP on the avalanche heading for Blair page three	CHRIS HARMAN looks at the birth of a new movement pages four and five	TARIQ ALI looks at the impact of anti-war protests across the world page five

LEARN FROM HISTORY

“The war which is likely to break out shortly is not like the Second World War. All comparisons with appeasement and Munich are so much hot air which merely justifies starting a war. This is a war of aggression by the greatest military power on earth against a smallish, though very nasty, dictatorship. The US has used 9/11 to proclaim its global hegemony. I think they underestimate the complexities of the world—high-tech means of mass destruction are not enough.”
ERIC HOBSBAWM
Professor

“This is not about the moral high ground Tony Blair has been speaking of. This is about the US retaliating for 11 September, and the coming confrontation is really to do with American concerns rather than those of the international community. It doesn’t look like 1939 or 1956. The effort to grab historical examples off the shelf and use them to legitimise what you’re doing at the moment seems to me to be treating history irresponsibly.”
RICHARD OVERY
Professor

Iraqi civilians sift through the rubble of their house after it was hit by British and US bombs in 1999 Picture: PA Photos

‘Bombing won’t bring us liberation’

Many Iraqis who fled Saddam Hussein’s regime are opposed to war. Socialist Worker spoke to four of them

Nadje al-Ali is a member of Act Together: Women against Sanctions and War on Iraq.
‘BUSH AND Blair’s talk of this being a war for the liberation of the Iraqi people is a lie. That is not the motivation. I do not think the people of Iraq will be liberated by having US and British troops occupy their country.
I am very much opposed to Saddam’s regime. Sometimes I feel we don’t make that clear enough. The regime is oppressive. It does not allow any political opposition. It is killing its own people. One of my uncles was executed.
Having said that, I am opposed to the economic sanctions. If anything, the regime has been strengthened by the sanctions. It has only meant the suffering of ordinary Iraqis.
Now with this war I think there is going to be an incredible humanitarian disaster. Already children are dying. Disease is

widespread and there is malnutrition. I’m angry that we’ve used these arguments all these years to lift the sanctions, and now Blair is trying to use them.
The US and Britain are to blame for the sanctions regime. I don’t trust George Bush’s motivation. The last thing in the Middle East he is concerned about is the welfare of the Iraqi people.
A war would not just be about oil. They are under pressure to do something in their war on terrorism and Iraq is an easy target.
The solution is to lift the economic sanctions. If Iraqis are given the chance to recover from various wars, continued bombing and sanctions they will be able to sort themselves out.
Saddam was supported by the West—that is one reason why Iraqis could not get rid of him!
I am sceptical of the Iraqi opposition groups that the press talks about. Some are CIA stooges—others have their own

interests. I think any hope comes from the Iraqi people.
If Saddam does have weapons of mass destruction and they bomb him, then he could think, I have nothing to lose—why not use them?
If he doesn’t, then all the killing of ordinary people will have happened for nothing. I think Blair’s idea that we who oppose war have blood on our hands is disgusting.
It’s hypocritical. Our leaders have been turning a blind eye to the killing all these years. No one gave a damn then.
The anti-war demonstrations in London and around the world were great.
Many Iraqis did not join the march. They are afraid of politicians. During the last war they were arresting Iraqis!
Sometimes I felt a bit guilty because the mood of the march reminded me of a carnival in Rio.
But I felt really good, positive and

moved by the march. It was the best protest I have participated in.’
Sabah Jawad is a member of the group Iraqi Democrats against War and Sanctions. He spoke at the Hyde Park rally on the 15 February demonstration.
‘WHAT IS going on is the cynical exploitation of the situation in Iraq. People have been struggling for 35 years against this regime for democracy and human rights.
The people who are advocating war now are the ones who turned a blind eye to that struggle.
The only people who support us are those opposing war. You can’t talk about defending human rights and contemplate devastating war.
The economic sanctions, the most ruthless imposed in the history of mankind, have resulted in one million people being killed. They are mostly children and ►

LEARN FROM HISTORY

“Saddam Hussein is not Hitler. He is not threatening to take over the world. His country does possess economic and strategic importance. The US is the driving force in the imminent invasion of Iraq and so the project is likely to succeed, at least in its immediate aims. Its wider consequences are wholly incalculable.”

RICHARD EVANS
Professor

“Blair would be taking a huge gamble if he ignores public opinion and joins George Bush in an imperialist war to oust the Iraqi dictator. A war on Iraq today could go badly wrong, result in heavy casualties, fuel terrorism and end up by destabilising the entire region. Blair would do well to reflect on the lessons of Suez.”

AVI SHLAIM
Historian

“There is no self evident threat from Iraq. There is no invasion of a sovereign territory to repulse. The tanks at Heathrow are not there to fend off an attack from Saddam. But we can’t destroy the invisible source of that menace, which is likely to grow, not diminish—fostered by a war for which the reason is far from plain.”

IAN KERSHAW
Professor

“In 2003 it is Iraq’s primary enemy, the United States, that possesses the world’s greatest stock of weapons of mass destruction. All I know is that I look at photographs of ordinary Iraqis caught between the rock of a foul ruler and the hard place of approaching armageddon, and it breaks my heart.”

LINDA COLLEY
Professor

1988: US defence secretary Frank Carlucci (left) and Admiral William Crow explain how US warships have allied with Iraqi forces to attack Iranian targets

► vulnerable people. This war is not about human rights or weapons of mass destruction. It is about the occupation of Iraq and control of energy. The US wants to dominate the world and its energy supplies.

Regime change is entirely up to the Iraqi people. They should decide how to establish a progressive, democratic society. It is up to the people all over the world. It is not the business of Bush and Blair to dictate what happens.

I think Blair has failed miserably in proving there are stockpiles of weapons in Iraq. Public opinion is against him. That is why he is finding new causes for this war, saying it is now about liberating Iraq. It is a sign of his isolation and desperation. I do not think he is convincing the British people.

I think he will suffer if he continues to align himself to the most reactionary establishment in the US. They are so right wing they think Israel’s leader Ariel Sharon is a moderate!

I came to Britain in 1968, three months after Saddam Hussein took power in a coup. He was aided and abetted by the CIA. When he was oppressing and gassing his people, and carrying out a war on the Kurds, what did they do?

They cite his human rights violations, but they are his backers of yesterday. The anti-war demonstrations were a massive show of solidarity and opposition. People across 600 capitals and cities were united with one voice saying we don’t want war.’

‘They cite Saddam’s human rights violations, but they are his backers of yesterday’

Eseel Ahmed was living in Iraq near the Amariya civilian shelter that the US blew up during the last Gulf War. The bombs incinerated 403 people inside, mainly women and children, on 13 February 1991. She has lived in Britain since 2001.

‘A WAR means more bloodshed and more disaster. I remember the last war. It was horror, a nightmare. Every night we feared we would not make it to the next day. Every night there was an attack.

No one was able to go out. We were trapped in our houses. The Amariya shelter was near where we lived. We were really lucky not to be there that day.

My grandmother was ill. She decided to stay in the house and risk dying there. We all decided to stay together. I remember the windows smashing with the force of the bombs. We were so lucky.

We had no electricity or water for three months. I fear that if there is a war this, and much worse, will happen again. Our hearts are with our family

and friends in Iraq.

All of us fled Iraq for our lives. You can’t speak up against the regime in Iraq. You can’t say anything about the president. The intelligence services are spread out. My life was in danger. They could have executed me or put me in one of their prisons.

If this war had a one percent chance of liberation, then yes. But it does not have even this chance. This war will not bring freedom. If Bush and Blair want freedom for us in Iraq, then they should leave it for us to decide who our leader is.

I had a feeling that the anti-war demonstrations would be big. But to see nearly two million people! I am so glad all these people oppose war. It was an unforgettable event. Hopefully its effect will be to stop the attack on Iraq.’

Usama al-Shabibi lives with his family in London. They all went on the anti-war demonstration.

‘THIS TALK of liberating Iraq is based on spin from Mr Blair.

It’s about oil and their interests in the region, those of the oil and arms corporations. They have recently stated that this is a humanitarian campaign. It is another lie. Iraqis do not support war. It is very difficult for Iraqis to voice their concerns.

Everyone wants to get rid of Saddam. Most Iraqis have suffered from Saddam. I have family in Iraq. I left Iraq 25 years ago. There are three million Iraqis in exile. The majority fled because of Saddam’s regime.

It is well documented that the West helped put him in power. The politicians supported Saddam’s regime. They were praising it, saying it will be good for our interests.

I think you liberate Iraq by first of all giving unconditional support to people opposing Saddam. Lift the sanctions. People spend every day trying to feed themselves and their families. They are too weak to think about the regime.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq are living on the daily rations they get from the government. These coupons cover things like flour, lentils and oil.

It means they are more under the regime’s control than before. I thought the anti-war demonstrations were fantastic. You could see all these people going onto the streets and saying we are fed up with these lies and we don’t want war.

This was really a candle in the dark. It was very promising.’

Mini nuke, major threat

The US is planning to use new nuclear weapons in this conflict, writes **Judy Cox**

THE PRO-WAR lobby claims that Saddam Hussein has hidden weapons of mass destruction and must be disarmed by military force.

We do not know what weapons Iraq really has. The United Nations weapons inspectors have so far found nothing.

But there is one regime that we know for certain possesses weapons of mass destruction in huge numbers—the US.

Bunker-buster

THE US has the world’s biggest nuclear arsenal. It is the only country to have used nuclear weapons.

Last week it was revealed that the Bush government is plotting in secret to develop a new generation of deadly nuclear weapons—“bunker busters”, “mini-nukes” and enhanced radiation or “neutron” bombs.

These “low yield” nuclear weapons will be easier to use on the battlefield than more powerful nukes. Their effect will be far more deadly than conventional weapons.

A leaked document outlines plans for a meeting of top nuclear scientists in the US Strategic Command, Nebraska, to plan “what nuclear weapons to build, how they might be tested, and to sell the ideas to the American public”.

Bush is tearing up non-proliferation treaties and agreements aimed at reducing the nuclear threat to the world.

Defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld has personally pioneered the development of new nuclear weapons.

George Bush let it be known last September that he is prepared to launch pre-emptive nuclear strikes.

Secret plans have been drawn up to use nuclear weapons against at least seven countries, including Russia, China, Libya and Syria, as well as Iraq, North Korea and Iran.

The US is also prepared to use such weapons if Israel comes under any threat.

Nuclear warheads will be carried on conventional cruise missiles and F-35

fighter jets will be adapted to carry them “at an affordable price”.

British defence secretary Geoff Hoon has reaffirmed that he would launch a nuclear strike against Iraq “in the right circumstances”.

Israel, the US’s key ally in the Middle East, has nuclear weapons pointed at every Arab capital.

The US has more than a million munitions, mostly artillery shells, armed with 31,000 tons of chemical weapons including mustard gas, and stockpiled in eight states.

More potentially lethal chemical material has been identified or is believed to exist at 99 locations in 38 states, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

US smokescreen

Claim: With sufficient black market uranium or plutonium Iraq could construct a nuclear weapon. **Fact:** It would take until the second half of the decade at the very least before Iraq

There is no such thing as a smart bomb

could develop a single nuclear bomb—and that’s according to the CIA. **Claim:** The Bush administration claims that Iraq has not verifiably accounted for substantial quantities of biological material that could be used for making biological weapons. **Fact:** Much of the biological weapons potential that Iraq formerly possessed, and

which Washington alleges it still possesses, was delivered to Iraq by the US itself. In the 1980s US corporations with the approval of the US government sent over 70 shipments of germs and chemicals with potential biological and chemical warfare uses to Saddam’s regime. This included various strains of anthrax.

The avalanche heading for Blair

George Galloway, left wing Labour MP and leading anti-war figure, spoke to Socialist Worker about the impact of the anti-war movement on the Labour Party and the future of politics in Britain

THE LABOUR leaders appear like the swan gliding serenely on the surface of the water. But like the swan they are paddling like hell underneath. The impact of millions on the streets is immense. And what millions! A large proportion were people who voted for Tony Blair at the last election.

A large number were trade union members paying the political levy to the Labour Party, and there were many individual Labour Party members as well.

There's no doubt that MPs, ministers and even the prime minister are taking stock.

The fact that Bush announced he is prepared to negotiate on a so called second resolution into March is very significant.

They were going to table a second resolution on the day Hans Blix put forward his report—14 February.

Then it was going to be on Monday of last week. Then they were going to table it at the end of last week. Now they say they are going to discuss it into next week.

The enemy is in some disarray. That was seen at the European summit and in the fiasco at NATO.

It is also etched on faces of government ministers, who look like different men from just a few weeks ago.

The number of MPs who could vote against war is well into three figures and approaching the 200 mark. Of course, it depends on whether we are in fact

allowed to vote in parliament on the war.

But the number of dissenting MPs is still not enough. People have got to put urgent and unrelenting pressure on their MPs.

The knowledge that one is to be hanged in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully.

MPs are, metaphorically speaking, hanged every four years. They need voters more than voters need them.

The thought that they might be losing public support to the extent that they might be out of a job is a factor.

But there is an overarching issue. That is the crisis of representation in Britain.

We discover—some of us knew it all along—but now the public discover that this is far from being a perfect democracy. We live in a country where it's as if Oliver Cromwell had never happened.

The monarch has the medieval power to take us to war. That power is vested in one person—the prime minister.

In this case it is a prime minister who thinks he's a president of Britain though also the governor of the 51st state of the US.

The democratic deficit is even wider. It is clear that whole sections of the British population are not represented in parliament at all.

They are locked out. There is the left, which is some millions strong. The trade unions, who are seven million strong, are virtually



George Galloway Pictures: RAY SMITH

unrepresented, as we saw from the firefighters' dispute.

Ethnic minorities are largely shut out, despite the presence of a few ethnic minority MPs (some of whom have been co-opted). Young people are largely excluded. That is reflected in the low turnout at elections.

This creates a vacuum and nature abhors a vacuum. Politics abhors a political vacuum even more. And so the vacuum is being filled on the streets and in public meetings.

The Stop the War Coalition's idea of a people's assembly as a counter to the lack of debate in parliament is an excellent initiative that is pregnant with possibilities.

We could have in fact two parliaments in Britain, one representative, the

other almost wholly unrepresentative.

There is already a sort of dual power in the country with millions demanding one thing and parliament refusing to hear them or even properly debate their concerns.

This situation will last longer than the Iraq crisis, and be of political importance for a long time to come.

The message for the Labour Party is stark. Either there has to be a regime change in the Labour Party or Mr Blair will succeed in breaking the Labour Party.

If he breaks the Labour Party, the need for a labour party will not have gone away. Some of us will be prepared to rebuild a labour party from the wreckage. One of those things has to happen.

The demand is growing that if Mr Blair takes us into this war and occupation of Iraq then he will have forfeited the right to be the prime minister of Britain and forfeited the right to be the leader of the Labour Party.

The exact form these things will take remains to be seen. But there is already deep disaffection in the trade unions with the government, and the left is growing.

I am fond of a quote from Lenin when he said there are decades in which nothing happens and there are weeks when decades happen.

I suspect we are now entering those weeks.

TURMOIL IN LABOUR

Fight for what you believe in

RICHARD PRICE is stepping down as chair of Gloucester Constituency Labour Party in protest at government policies. He spoke to *Socialist Worker*.

'I joined Labour because I loathe the Tories and everything they stand for.

I have been brought up to think that the Tories are the party of the ruling classes, that no ordinary working class person has any business voting for them and that they are the anti trade union party.

I have always thought of Labour as the party of social justice, the working classes and the party of the trade unionist.

My reasons for standing down as party chair in Gloucester are because of a number of factors—not just because of the leadership's policy on Iraq.

I am also dissatisfied with the government's current attitude towards striking firefighters and local government workers during last summer's strike action.

Talk of reintroducing legislation from 1947 which would put the power to impose employment conditions and rates of pay on the fire service into the hands of the government has shocked me.

Certainly regarding Iraq, I believe my views are held by the majority of ordinary Labour Party members.

Many of them are reluctant to leave the party though—they believe that Tony Blair is just one person in the party and they do not see why they should leave it to him.

These are people who have been in the party a great deal longer than myself. There are circumstances in which I could leave the Labour Party.

Iraq is a major matter of principle and conscience for me. I would certainly resign from the party if military action is taken by Britain without the support of the UN.

That is not to say that I agree with action even with the UN's consent.

If something is wrong now, it doesn't suddenly become right just because the Security Council says so—especially if they have been bribed and bullied into changing their minds.

The 15 February demo was a fantastic display of the strength of feeling over Iraq and conflict in general.

I spent the day marching with six members of the Gloucester Labour Party, and I know of many others in the local party who also attended.

What has given me most hope is that the level of British people's apathy in politics has been proven to be a myth by that demo alone.

If people have something to believe in, they'll come out and fight for it. People are not apathetic about politics—they are apathetic about mainstream political parties.

We need a political organisation in Britain which truly represents and protects the interests of ordinary working people above all else, and which fights prejudice from extremist organisations like the BNP.'



WHAT WE saw on 15 February was incredible. It was not just the demonstrations in Britain—it was the protests right around the world. The *Financial Times* said they were the biggest demonstrations since the Vietnam War. In fact, there was nothing coordinated on this scale during Vietnam.

On 15 February some four or five million marched in Spain, more than three million in Italy, 500,000 in Germany and, if you put together all the different demos across the US, probably one million people protested there.

The demonstration of 200,000 in the Canary Islands will be a revelation to anyone who has been on holiday there.

These protests have already had an impact on the rulers of the world. I fear it won't be enough to stop Bush taking us to war. But it has made clear to his allies how difficult the drive to war is, and got Tony Blair squirming.

People are realising just how many lies those ruling the system will tell when they try to convince us that theirs is the only way of doing things.

People are beginning to see alternatives on a scale unimaginable only four or five years ago. The protests in Seattle in November 1999 were a turning point, but only involved about 50,000 people.

Since then we have had demonstrations of 300,000 in Genoa, 500,000 in Barcelona and one million in Florence. This adds up to a whole rebellion against different aspects of the system.

This itself is a political fact of great importance. A generation of people is getting involved in politics for the first time.

Throughout the history of capitalism you can see a pattern where people rebel and are then defeated. Then they have to live with the system for the rest of their lives. They become demoralised and think that nothing can be done to change things.

They are not convinced that the system is good—they just don't think there is any way it can be changed. Every so often a new generation emerges to challenge the system. And people from the old generation get drawn back into the struggle.

I saw that on the anti-war demonstration after the European Social Forum in Florence last November. Many old people were at their balconies applauding the marchers. These were people who had lived through fascism, fought in the Resistance, seen their movement rise and fall through the 1960s and could see things happening once again.

On 15 February right across the world young people were on the streets with their parents and grandparents, opposing something the system was trying to do.

This sense of internationalism can be traced right back to when Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto in the 1840s. Simultaneous revolutions and uprisings erupted in several countries across Europe.

This was followed by a period of defeat. But in the 1860s there was a revival of the movement. Small numbers of trade unionists from several countries got together to form the First International.

It drew together all sorts of people who wanted to change society. Some believed you could do it through reform. Others argued that you needed revolution. That process reached its high point when the working class took over Paris and set up the Paris Commune in 1871.

After the defeat of the Commune people were forced back into retreat until 1889. Then a new International was built which lasted until the First World War. It was broken when Labour-type parties backed that war.

Those opposed to the war established a new International in 1918-19. It launched a new spell of internationalism.



Protesters in Glasgow on 15 February Picture: Duncan Brown

Birth of a new movement

Chris Harman *is the editor of Socialist Worker. He has been an active socialist since the anti Vietnam War movement of the 1960s. He describes the significance of the 15 February demonstrations across the globe*

This rose again in the 1930s with the horror of fascism, recession and war. There was a wave of solidarity with the inspiring example of the revolution in Spain.

Again in the 1960s there were movements inspired by the revolt against the war in Vietnam. Now there is another of those bursts of internationalism, but on a much, much greater scale than ever before.

At the various social forums that have taken place around the world, lots of people have come together to discuss how to change society. At the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre two years ago some 20,000 or 30,000 people gathered.

Its second forum last year was 50,000 or 60,000 strong. This year there were 100,000 people crowding into rooms with people speaking in ten, 12 or 15 languages, discussing how to change things.

There was a range of ideas expressed. Some argued it's just a question of a few pressures on the system—some argued we have to overthrow the system. But it is the

coming together of these debates that is fantastically new.

It was out of precisely these discussions that the initiative was taken for the demonstrations on 15 February, although the protests were vastly bigger than the forums themselves.

The people who organised the demonstrations were influenced by the international movement. That's why marches took place in so many places across the world.

The beneficial side effect of globalisation is the globalisation of communications. It is possible for the first time in history for people to get in contact with other countries through e-mails, websites and cheaper phone calls.

Every move in capitalist globalisation creates a reaction from below, with people organising on the ground and generalising their experiences.

There are three main aspects to the movement now developing. First, there is

the quite small component made up of those who are already revolutionary socialists. We are used to going on demonstrations in which we are a large component. But last Saturday we were a tiny part of the march.

We have been part of organising and carrying the anti-war arguments, but we have managed to trigger a movement a hundred times bigger than we are.

The second element is the large numbers of young people and trade unionists who have been influenced by the growing anti-capitalist movement over the last three or so years.

Since Seattle there are people who have followed the movement, absorbed its ideas, and read articles by Paul Foot, George Monbiot and John Pilger. These were also in a minority on the march.

The third element was made up of large numbers of people just beginning to be touched by these ideas.

They are also pulled by other argu-

ments. Some would think that if the UN gave the go-ahead for war that would make it alright. They repeat the respectable arguments used by archbishops. But the minority who are clear about how to stop the war can talk to and influence much wider numbers.

This is a challenge for everyone. In periods of retreat for the movement people end up huddling together and talking to small groups to protect themselves from the outside world.

Now we are in a new period in which the most important thing is to reach out to new people and involve them in action. That means discussing with wide groups of people—not to lecture them, but to debate with them.

This is a challenge to everyone who reads *Socialist Worker*.

We have to think, who went on the demonstration? Who do I know on my street? How do we get in touch with others? Let's get them organised and talk

about what we do if war breaks out.

There are comparisons with the 1960s.

Revolutionary socialists were tiny in number in 1967. Between 1967 and 1974 there was a huge movement. Everywhere around the world revolutionaries grew from being tiny to influencing thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people. At certain decisive moments these people could influence millions.

In Britain when nothing is happening the Socialist Workers Party looks very big.

‘The most important thing is to reach out to new people and involve them in action’

When you have two million on the streets you realise there are thousands of other people whose ideas are not that different from our own.

They care about the same things as us. They want a better world just like we do. We have to involve these people.

All the demonstrators opposed the war. Most of them would be just as opposed to what the International Monetary Fund is doing to Third World countries. Many would also have supported the firefighters—not all of them, but 70, 80 or 90 per cent would have.

On other questions it would be different. Many of the marchers would have been pulled by some press arguments about asylum seekers, for example.

That is why we need discussion, debate and to begin to organise together for a better world.

There is a tendency for strands of the movement to begin to challenge the system as a whole. War is one of the nastier aspects

of the system, but people are more than just against war.

At the rally in Hyde Park on 15 February those speakers who gave some sense of opposing the system as well as just the war got a rapturous response.

It wasn't just the people who buy *Socialist Worker* who were cheering. People like this exist in cities across Europe, Latin America, North America, Australia, parts of Asia and Africa.

There is a massive explosion of debate about how to make the world better.

This is the new movement being born. Look back at the 1860s for a comparison. The International then had a narrow base of people who came together to support strikes in other countries. A few years later there was the Paris Commune, when workers took over one of the world's major cities.

Today people are coming together to discuss what to do and the potential is there for something much more significant even than the movement so far.

INTERVIEW

‘Our marches have had a big impact’

TARIQ ALI, *writer and broadcaster, has been an anti-war activist since the 1960s*

How have governments in Europe been affected by the anti-war demonstrations?

The size of the demonstrations in London, Rome, Madrid, Paris and Berlin has stunned everyone.

What this shows is the emergence of an unofficial opposition to official politics.

If the French leader Chirac and Germany's prime minister Schröder capitulate to the imperial pressure of Washington they will pay a heavy price.

In Italy prime minister Berlusconi has said in public that he will not ignore the three million who marched in Rome.

In Britain the Blair regime is on the defensive regardless of the spin and the rhetoric. Even loyalist Labour MPs were shaken by the size and composition of the demonstration and the strength of feeling.

The key fact here is whether they will display the ruthlessness of the Tories who ditched their leader Margaret Thatcher when she had become a liability.

Labour MPs of left and right tend to be far more sentimental towards their leadership, but Blair isn't really a traditional Labour leader.

So it should be easier for the junior rats to push the big rat off the sinking ship first in the hope that they might save the ship.

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What impact do you think the protests will have in the Middle East?
It is very difficult to judge.

After all, the two-year intifada (Palestinian uprising) and the Israeli response to it—which the Arab masses identify with much more than

Saddam—did not provoke mass demonstrations on the Arab streets. Will the occupation of Iraq? I hope so, but I doubt it. I think the impact will be felt more in the medium and long term.

The Arab world desperately needs someone like Nasser, the Egyptian leader 50 years ago, to mobilise and defend the Arab nation against imperialist raids and depredation.

New national movements are bound to arise, grow and develop over the next decade.

Can anti-war protests shift any of the regimes in the Middle East?
Only if they develop an insurrectionary flavour.

An Arab-wide intifada—an Arab 1848—against the corrupt, pro-imperialist regimes could sweep them aside, but at the moment there are few signs of such a development.

It's interesting that 2,000 people, Arabs and Jews, could march in Tel Aviv on 15 February, but in Islamabad there were only 100 demonstrators and in Lahore 1,000.

The mobilisations in Rio de Janeiro (20,000 people) and Buenos Aires (6,000 people) were larger than in the Muslim world.

The reason for this is partially fear, partially demoralisation and a mood of despair that breeds apathy.

What sort of support do the US's allies have in their own countries?
If you had a free election in Egypt, President Mubarak would not get more than 10 percent of the vote.

The Islamists would

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emerge as the largest bloc, but not an overall majority. In the political vacuum that exists they have become the main opposition.

In Saudi Arabia the Islamists would win a big majority. In Kuwait the ruling family would disappear.

In Jordan, which is an Israeli-US protectorate, the Palestinians and Islamists would form a government.

Everyone knows this and that is why the West prefers to rule through the elites that have served them well, rather than the unruly masses, who might demand Arab control of Arab oil.

What is your response to political commentators like Christopher Hitchens and David Aaronovitch who argue that the left doesn't care about Saddam's victims?

They lie—what more can one say?

I remember marching and speaking for the Kurds when they were under attack by Saddam, as did my old friend Jeremy Corbyn.

I do not recall most of our detractors today showing the slightest interest in the victims of Saddam's repression in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The West supported him and armed him. He was their man in Baghdad till he got too strong and the Israelis began to get very nervous.

Our opposition to the war does not indicate any support for Saddam's regime.

We are opposed to the new imperial design prepared in Washington.

The reasons for the war are both political and economic. They have nothing to do with Saddam's brutalities or his nonexistent weapons of mass destruction.

I think the people who marched on 15 February understood this instinctively. Otherwise they wouldn't have marched.



Italy

Picture: Liberations

SPAIN 'The protests here were incredible, perhaps a tenth of the population. The right wing PP government supports Bush, but the vast majority of people, 90 percent, are against war. There is a strong tradition in Spain of opposing the US. We had a US-backed dictatorship for 40 years. That doesn't explain the sheer size of the anti-war protests though. They have grown out of the mood that has developed over the last 18 months.	In March 2001 300,000 students protested over an attack on education. Then in March last year 400,000 marched in Barcelona over a government-backed hydroelectric plan that will devastate the environment.	Half a million protested outside the European Union leaders' summit in Barcelona last year. In June last year at least ten million people took part in a general strike over pension law reform and two million people demonstrated.	This is the soil from which the anti-war movement has sprung. We don't have a national anti-war body like in Britain—it is more organised at a city level with coalition bodies. Things are developing. This week mass assemblies of students discussed plans for strikes and occupations if war does start. If the unions wanted it, there would be stoppages. I think people may walk out in some places anyway.'	ANDREU DURAN	Spain
ITALY 'I TRAVELLED to Rome with one of the chartered trains from Naples. When they closed the barriers people were running across the tracks, clambering onto the train. In Rome an hour before the demo started the square for the final rally was already full, and it holds a million people. The movement in Italy has grown out of the huge mobilisations over the last year, such as the anti-capitalist protests in Genoa in 2001 and the European Social Forum in	Florence last November. The anti-war movement has been strongly influenced by the success of the Stop the War Coalition in Britain. There is a good tradition recently in Italy of people working together. There is now a	coordinating body called Fermiamo la Guerra (let's stop the war) and there is an impulse towards local groups. There is a real possibility of significant strikes if war starts. I think the CGIL, equivalent to the TUC, will find it	hard not to call some action. The Fiom engineering union is committed to strikes if war starts, as is the important Cobas rank and file union grouping. An agreed statement read out from the platform at the end of the Rome	demonstration said, "There are those who think only the powerful can make history. "Today throughout the world we are showing the opposite. We've got enormous power in our hands".'	TOM BEHAN

Do you think this war is about oil and US power?

Do you think people should come before profit?

☐

Had enough of Blair's contempt for democracy?

☐

Hate racism, the BNP and attacks on asylum seekers?

☐

Have you been supporting the firefighters?

☐

YES? Then you belong in the Socialist Workers Party

I want to join the Socialist Workers Party

Name

Address

.....

.....

Phone

E-mail

Union (if applicable)

To join or for more information
fill in the form

Send to SWP, PO Box 82,
London E3 3LH

Phone 020 7538 0538

E-mail membership@swp.org.uk

Web www.swp.org.uk



Bush's world of bombs and disease

The United States is blocking a deal to give to give Third World countries access to cheap AIDS drugs. Charlie Kimber says that this is a war on the poor

GEORGE BUSH and his business backers are sentencing millions of people to death by withholding drugs required to combat HIV infection and AIDS. Bush has worked alongside the world's biggest pharmaceutical firms to defend the patents that keep up the prices of anti-HIV and anti-AIDS medicines.

Last week Bush's US trade negotiating team smashed up an agreement that could have made the drugs available to millions of people in the Third World.

They blocked changes to an agreement known as TRIPS (Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) that would have allowed countries to buy or make cheaper drugs when demanded by a health emergency.

Bush's decision means millions of orphans, economies wrecked, families destroyed, and a mound of corpses. Last year 6,000 people died every day in Africa from AIDS. Bush's policy has guaranteed it will be even worse next year.

This is what US power means. It is the global force to squeeze debt repayments from devastated countries, to enforce economic policies that clear the way for the multinationals, to deal out certain death because people are too poor to afford care.

Campaigning against the war in Iraq is about opposing US power. Many protests are demanding that US government control is broken and that people should come before the multinationals' profits.

World leaders are comfortably presiding over a system where 3.1 million people died last year from HIV/AIDS, 40 million will die soon, and thousands of millions are at risk.

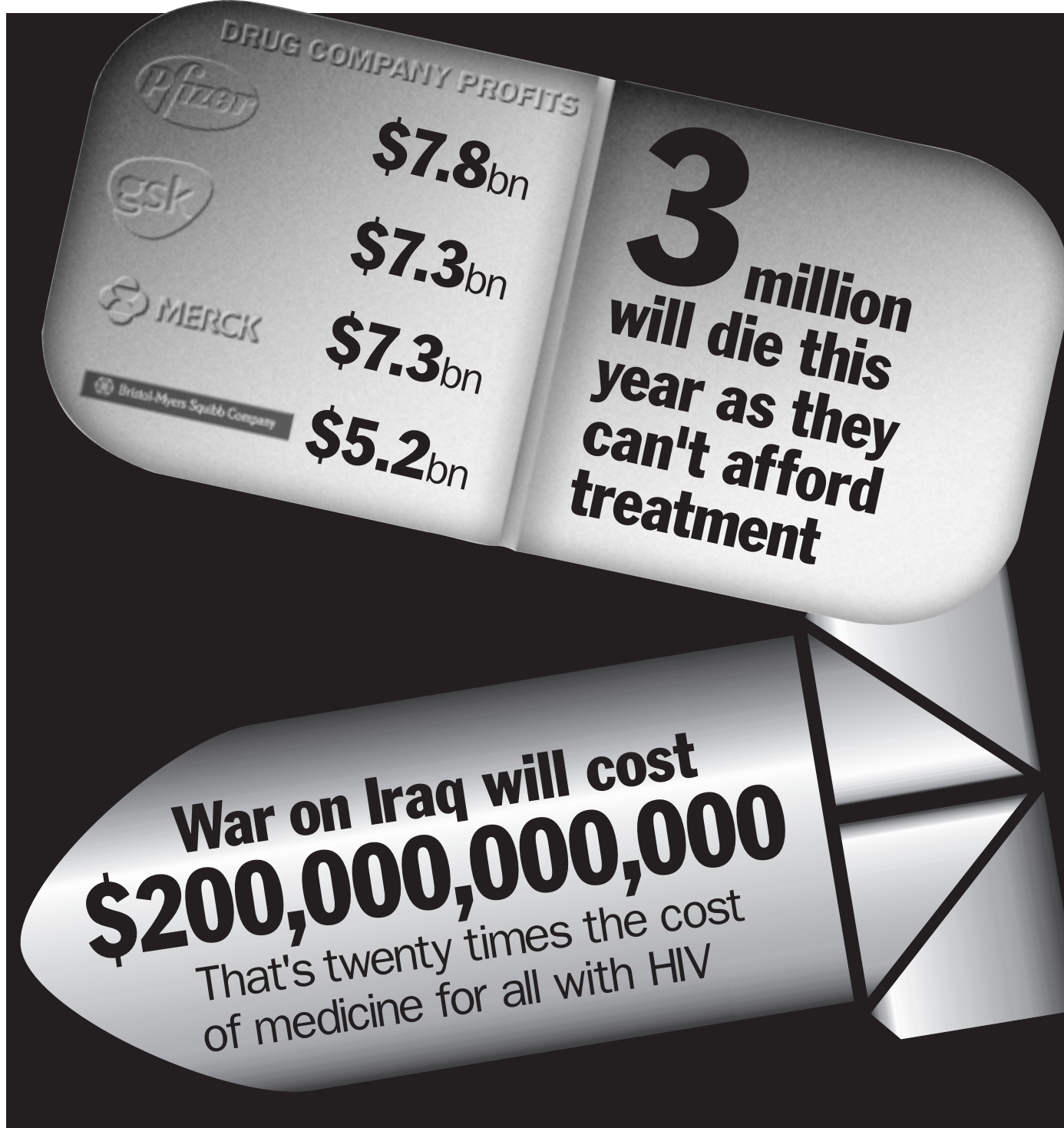
Yet they have only pledged \$2 billion to the major world initiative to combat this devastation.

Richard Feachem, head of the United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, says, "The HIV/AIDS pandemic is not going to peak until 2050 or 2060. We're very early in something that is very devastating."

"A few billion dollars to take action against that threat are paltry. But also what about a war with Iraq? That would cost somewhere between \$100 billion and \$200 billion, so if you make that comparison this is small change."

Major companies have patented the most appropriate combinations of drugs for AIDS in 37 out of 53 African countries and almost all of Asia and Latin America. This means the prices stay high. A true comparison would be asking someone in Britain to pay £300 a day to get crucial treatment.

The US government has forced a rule through the World



Trade Organisation that makes it impossible for poor countries to import cheaper ("generic") versions of these drugs even if companies do relax patents.

Trade ministers promised to remove this lethal clause last year, after intense pressure from people across the world. The US government last week blocked a deal to make drugs, including anti-retrovirals, cheaper.

Anti-retroviral drugs inhibit HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and boost the immune system's ability to fight infections. They have led to a dramatic reduction in HIV-related illness and death in countries where they have become widely available.

But the vast majority of people with HIV/AIDS live in poor countries and are too poor to get the treatment.

The US keeps a list of countries called Special 301. If these countries step out of line over issues such as drug patents they will face trade sanctions.

The poorest countries, which will never develop their own drugs industries, are left off the list. Countries that might export generic medicines are kept on. The terror of falling foul of the US's diplomatic, economic and military power is enough to bring most into line.

A recent report from the charity Oxfam says, "Special 301 is a big stick widely feared by developing countries—not just because of the threat of sanctions but because of the associated political pressures."

The power to bully and inflict carnage—that is what Bush wants to reinforce through war on Iraq.

US distributes misery

BUSH ANNOUNCED \$15 billion to fight HIV and AIDS in his State of the Union address on 28 January. It was a cynical manoeuvre to cover his crimes.

The money is not directed towards the UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It will receive only \$1 billion of the proposed extra aid over the next five years.

Instead of contributing to the Global Fund, Bush is giving the new money to US government agencies, such as USAID.

USAID is the major government body for distributing aid. Its role is to boost the strategic and economic interests of the US government. Over the next

year around a quarter of its \$8 billion budget will go to Israel, Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan.

USAID administrator Andrew Natsios opposes the treatment of AIDS with anti-retrovirals in poor countries. The team which directs US policy on AIDS reveals the motives which drive the policy.

It includes Dr Anthony Fauci, a leading expert on "bio-terrorism", Joshua Bolton, head of national security, and Robin Cleveland, deputy national security adviser.

Such people believe that AIDS is important only when it is a security threat to the US, not when it is a killer of tens of millions in Africa and Asia.

Poverty is death

HIV-POSITIVE people need a combination of drugs to keep the HIV levels low in their blood.

The simplest combination is zidovudine (AZT), lamivudine (3TC), and either efavirenz or nevirapine.

The multinational drugs company GlaxoSmithKline sells Combivir (AZT plus 3TC) for \$620.50 a year to the poorest African countries. Boehringer Ingelheim sells nevirapine for \$438 a year.

The total price of treatment is \$1,058 a year. Indian generic drugs company Cipla sells a pill called Triomune, which combines all three drugs, for \$304 a year. This is less than a third of the multinationals' price.

Abolishing patents and the drug companies' stranglehold would be a step forward. But it would not be nearly enough to save everyone. Around 15 percent of people in Malawi in Africa are HIV positive, 1.7 million people. The entire health budget is \$52 million.

Even if the whole budget was spent on anti-AIDS drugs it would cover only 49,149 people if bought at the multinationals' price, or 171,052 at the cheaper rate.

Nobody gets the drugs unless they pay for treatment themselves. Most people live on around 50 cents a day or less.

The humane policy would be to make treatment free, to cancel the debt which pumps money away from health and education services in poor countries, and to pour money into research to combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Prices kept high

IN 2001 the four giant pharmaceutical firms grabbed over \$27 billion in profits. The 2002 figure will certainly be over \$30 billion.

These companies do not make huge profits from AIDS drugs in the Third World. Very few people can afford them.

They protect the patents in order to keep prices high in Europe and the US, and to defend the system where they control the cost of medicines that could benefit everyone.

GlaxoSmithKline sells the drug Combivir in Africa at \$620.50 a year.

It sells the same drug in Britain at \$6,638 a year, making massive profits.

From the front line

Just a selection of the e-mails that you sent us this week

‘THE GREATER Manchester Coalition to Stop the War is coordinating an anti-war demonstration on 8 March.

This will involve three separate marches converging on the city centre.

On the city centre stall on Saturday 5,000 leaflets and hundreds of posters were distributed.

Local Stop the War groups are already working on activities to build the demo, such as leafleting every house on a ward by ward basis.

We are encouraging everyone to get organised in their neighbourhood, college, school or workplace.

In Chorlton a weekly Friday protest at the main crossroads is attracting up to 100 people. In Bury following a motorcade through the town anti-war campaigners rallied in the town centre on Saturday and then went off to leaflet and petition, building for the 8 March Manchester demo.’

Richard Searle, Mark Krantz and Geoff Brown

‘OVER 2,000 anti-war protesters marched through the centre of Winchester last Saturday.

The demonstration was organised by local church and Muslim groups, and led by the Bishop of Winchester, Michael Scott-Joynt, and the city’s Liberal Democrat MP, Mark Oaten.’

Gavin Capps

‘AT SOAS college in London University the Unison staff union has agreed “to support those members who feel morally obligated to leave work and join the demonstration in London if war starts”.

We will be holding meetings to discuss how to build for other actions in the coming weeks, as well as how to translate that resolution into action.’

Ian Rappel

‘HEALTH WORKERS at Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham are ready for further action.

We have been petitioning and leafleting at lunchtimes to build our local demonstration in Birmingham on Saturday. We are also collecting names of people prepared to begin civil disobedience by protesting at the hospital gates should bombing go ahead.’

Lynne Hubbard

‘OVER 400 people marched through Plymouth last Saturday against war. Traffic was brought to a standstill when marchers sat down across the major highway. Protesters included a large contingent from Plymouth University.

Two organisers of the march were arrested and held for seven hours. Both have been charged. Following the arrests the march went to the police station and sat down, closing off the main route through the city.

A major protest was planned outside Plymouth magistrates’ court on Wednesday when the protesters are due to appear.’

Peter Heddle

‘MORE THAN 650 people attended a Stop the War public meeting at Dewsbury Town Hall last Saturday.

Labour MP Mike Wood joined local councillors in condemning the war-mongering of the Blair administration.’

Terry McKay

‘BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL Students Against the War are organising school walkouts across the city by asking students to sign a petition declaring an intent to protest in this manner against the start of any bombing of Iraq.’

Alex Cummins

‘IN BARRY, South Wales, young people have been campaigning solidly against the war drive.

Last Thursday we dropped a banner reading “Drop Bush not Bombs” at a busy roundabout. We have also been leafleting and arguing the case against war.’

Luke Nicholas

‘WE HAVE formed a small anti-war group in the development planning unit at Bartlett, University College London. Our department is a multinational one—we have 36 different nationalities (there are only 65 students in this unit)—so hopefully we can do something.’

Nisreen Karsou

‘WE HAVE decided to build smaller, more local groups by holding meetings in supporters’ front rooms.

There were immediate results. At one meeting supporters suggested we picket the next surgery of our MP, Tessa Jowell. Last Saturday we went down one street and in only ten minutes over 20 windows were showing “Don’t attack Iraq” posters.’

Dulwich Stop the War

‘AROUND 25 people met in Wakefield last Thursday to plan further action against the threat of war. We agreed to call a local demo in Wakefield for Saturday 8 March. We agreed to plan for local action if and when war breaks out.’

Wakefield Stop the War Coalition

‘WE WERE having our first meeting since the national demo in Kensington and Paddington on Wednesday. To be discussed are regular stalls and the distribution of leaflets. We will also be lobbying our MP this weekend.’

Vivien Ashley

‘AT THE Leeds Stop the War Coalition meeting last Monday everyone shared stories about the demo and talked about what we should do next.

There were more new faces, and quite a long discussion about the call for mass civil disobedience and the possibility of a general strike. A follow-up protest in Leeds city centre was planned. Harehills Stop the War planned to lobby the surgery of George Mudie, MP for East Leeds, on Friday.

The Headingley group held its first meeting last week—15 people met to plan future activities in the area, including a showing of the *Not In My Name* video, and a public meeting.

At Leeds University students were to assemble at the university and march to the city centre to join Thursday’s protest as well as organising a university anti-war day of protest on 5 March.’

Paula Champion, Katie Wheatley, Annemarie Piso and Vasilis Zoumpos

‘I HAVE been campaigning for peace and freedom for nearly 50 years, and 15 February was mind-boggling.

We must keep up the pressure. We should demonstrate in our communities, with regular vigils or marches in every small or large town, even sit-downs in appropriate places. In Cornwall we have St Mawgan, an American air base.’

Peter Le Mare

‘AT A public meeting on 18 February those who went to the London demo and other supporters decided to extend the anti-war effort in the area by continuing the regular high street stall and organising a series of public meetings and events.’

Harwich Coalition

‘IN BLACKBURN two coaches went to London and there was a big anti-war

meeting a week before attended by 600 people.

We are now trying to organise events in Blackburn College with the help of staff support workers. Blackburn will make sure that we do everything in our power to stop war.’

Chris Mottershaw

‘WE WILL occupy Bournemouth Square every Saturday from 1pm to 3pm. We are also organising a march and rally for 15 March.’

Bournemouth Stop the War Coalition

‘ISLINGTON STOP War Coalition met last Thursday. The main focus will be to prepare for mass civil disobedience, including walkouts, demonstrations and college occupations in the event of war.’

Alasdair Smith

‘WE WILL protest against Oxford MP Andrew Smith next Friday. Oxford Brookes University students are also arranging a “Party for Peace”.

George Roe

‘WE HAVE called a south west march for Saturday 15 March in Exeter. We have also made plans to respond to any attack on Iraq with protests in the city.

If a war is declared we are urging people to leave their workplaces and show that any war is “not in their name”.

Lizi Alnatt

‘WE ARE lobbying Barry Sheerman MP’s surgery on Friday. Local trade unionists are raising the question of walkouts. Local sixth form colleges—Greenhead, Huddersfield Tech and New College—are having walkouts from lectures next week.’

Pauline Wheat-Bowen

‘IN SCOTLAND as well as the massive demo in Glasgow on 15 February there were simultaneous protests in various parts of the Highlands and Islands by people who could not make the journey.

For example, 300 assembled at short notice in Inverness before a spontaneous march through the town centre.

In order to give Highlanders an opportunity to properly express their feelings there is a Highlands-wide march called in Inverness on Saturday 15 March.’

Frank Ward

‘LAST FRIDAY we lobbied Telford Labour MP David Wright against war. Protesters included a Labour Party member with his membership card stapled to a home-made petition against the war. We will be lobbying Wrekin Labour MP Peter Bradley this Friday.’

Mike Jeffries

‘WALTHAM FOREST Stop the War group has attracted more people in the wake of the demo. A local demonstration was planned for Friday.’

Brian Meade

‘ON 19 February Sheffield Stop the War Coalition held a convention attended by over 150 people to plan more action. The convention decided to organise for a Sheffield demonstration on 8 March.

Local groups will be marching from over ten assembly points around the city to the centre, joining the main demonstration outside City Hall.

Sheffield council has already passed a motion opposing the war. This march will put further pressure

on our “representatives”, especially ministers Blunkett and Caborn.’

Jason Leman

‘WE ARE moving to set up local groups in Cambridge. One group at Hills Road Sixth Form Centre plans a lunchtime meeting which may turn into a walkout or teach-in.

Other groups now starting include one at a local Catholic school and one at the other main sixth form. Post workers and council workers already have groups.’

Andy Lay

‘OVER 400 people attended a protest at the US base at Fairford in Gloucestershire last Sunday. They forced open the main gates and some managed to enter the base where the B-2 Stealth bombers are based.’

Matt Gordon

‘SOUTH WALES Stop the War Coalition has an organising meeting next Wednesday. In Swansea we were organising a big protest outside the Welsh Labour Party conference on Friday. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade was planning a protest on Saturday.

In Cardiff we are having a meeting to discuss a plan of action. At Cardiff University a group of students are talking about an emergency general meeting to plan an occupation when war starts.

Blackwood Stop the War Coalition has a meeting on Monday. We have a protest arranged on the day war starts. We are looking to have stalls in Blackwood and other towns such as Newbridge and Tredegar.’

Teresa Goss, Huw Williams and Adam Johannes

‘THINGS HAVE really taken off for the Sedgemoor Peace Group since we organised transport for the 15 February march in London. We have leafleted shopping centres in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Cheddar.

We were unable to book enough coaches to satisfy demand for the London demo but still managed to take over 150 people. We have started a Saturday peace vigil in Bridgwater.’

Jeff Brewster

‘OUR WEST Somerset group was formed on 1 February. In just two weeks we booked and filled two coaches from Minehead. Future plans include a coach trip to Fairford on 22 March to join the protest there.’

Jon Freeman

‘OVER 200 supporters took buses from Sherwood to London. Window posters are now being distributed for the local Nottingham demo on 8 March as well as a leaflet about what to do if war starts.

A banner and placard making day has been arranged for Saturday. This all follows our first Stop the War meeting in Sherwood last Tuesday.’

Richard Buckwell

‘LONDON FIRE Authority Unison’s annual general meeting last week voted to call a lunchtime protest on the day war breaks out.’

Tony Phillips

‘SATURDAY 8 March is International Women’s Day. This year it looks likely to take place while our government and the US will be bombing Iraq.

Globalise Resistance Scotland is inviting everyone to take part in an anti-war event outside the RAF air base in Leuchars, north east Fife, on this day.

The RAF Leuchars air base in north east Fife has been involved in the bombing of Iraq since 1991. The Tornados sent from here are crucial to the UK mobilisation for war.’

Gill Hubbard

‘WYCOMBE GROUP will now have a stall in High Wycombe town centre every Saturday. We made plans for protests in the event of war breaking out, and we’re setting up a public meeting.’

Simon Cope

‘AFTER AN impromptu meeting after the 15 February demonstrations, lecturers and researchers at Liverpool University have called a meeting to launch a group. We will show the *Not In My Name* video and then have a practical discussion about activities.’

Mark O’Brien

‘THE WEE island of Bute, now also known as the Isle of Discontent, situated in the Clyde Estuary, is 20 miles from Coupor, Britain’s home to over 200 nuclear warheads.

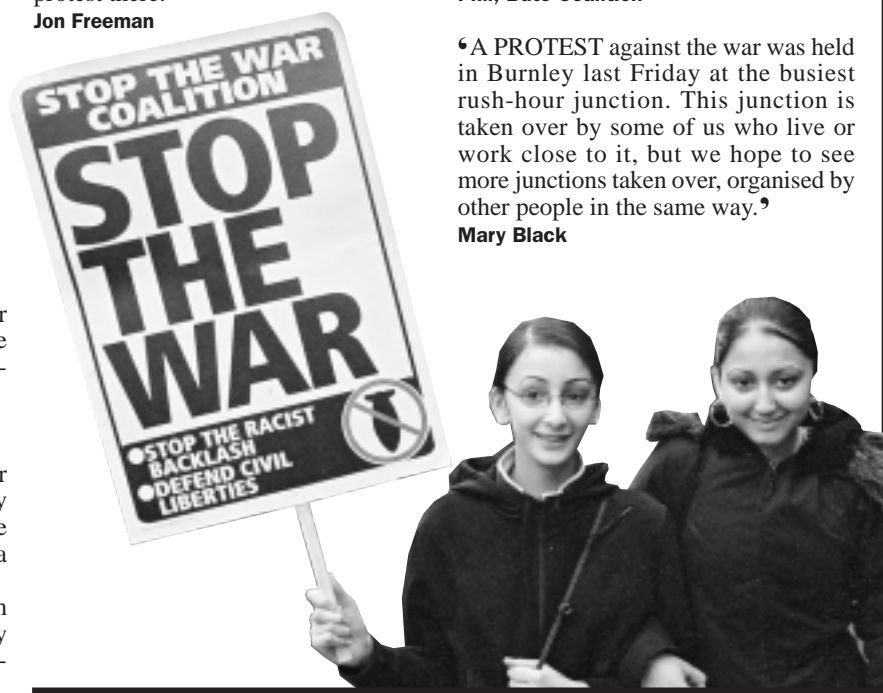
The Bute Coalition for Peace not War has hosted several public meetings. Some 80 people, young and old, sailed on the ferry to the Glasgow demo.

We are now also holding weekly vigils. We are now calling for non-violent civil disobedience, with some suggesting that we blockade the harbour to disrupt the ferry timetables.’

Phil, Bute Coalition

‘A PROTEST against the war was held in Burnley last Friday at the busiest rush-hour junction. This junction is taken over by some of us who live or work close to it, but we hope to see more junctions taken over, organised by other people in the same way.’

Mary Black



Many thanks to all those anti-war activists who sent us reports. Keep on sending them to reports@socialistworker.co.uk—and we’ll try to print as many as possible. Picture: Richard Searle

in my view

A chorus of disapproval

CHORUS SINGERS at the English National Opera (ENO) struck on Tuesday.

They are staging a series of one-day strikes to prevent 20 of the 60 chorus singers losing their jobs.

Their strike is about much more than the jobs, important though they are. It raises the question of who controls access to art in our society.

Opera is seen as the most inaccessible and elitist of art forms. It is controlled by a small, increasingly corporate-dominated elite. Opera performances can seem like part of high society, like Henley Regatta or polo matches.

But thousands of ordinary people would love the chance to enjoy opera more fully. The TV series *Operatunity* shows this. It is a *Pop Idol* type talent contest.

But it shows working class people—builders and women working on the checkout at Tesco—who are passionately committed to opera and extremely talented singers.

ENO has made great efforts to bridge the gap between traditional audiences and those ordinary people who love opera.

It puts on popular and radical operas in English. Its reputation is based on the strength of the whole cast rather than high profile soloists from the international circuit. And it sells cheap tickets.

In the cheap seats at ENO you sit with people who are appreciating the music, rather than among the black ties and posh frocks who are just there to be seen—and often snore gently through performances.

Over the last two years the ethos of ENO has come under threat.

Executive box

Martin Smith, a merchant banker, was appointed chairman of the ENO board. Previously he had made a massive donation to the company.

Smith brought with him the brutal methods of a City boardroom.

ENO's well respected director David Poutney walked out last November. He accused Smith of bullying and engineering a corporate takeover.

When Smith announced that one third of the world-class chorus were to lose their jobs, anger boiled over.

The chorus face the sack if they talk to the press. But Martin Brown from their union, Equity, explained how their sense of anger and betrayal soon turned into determination.

The singers are pouring their creative energy into running their campaign. They held a singing lobby of the Arts Council, with a stirring performance of Verdi's "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves".

On the night their strike shut down a performance of *The Trojans*, the chorus put on a free concert in a church in Covent Garden to show their commitment to music and their audience.

In contrast Smith wants to crush the spirit of ENO and turn it into a bland company where performers are scared for their jobs, and profits are king.

Anyone who has been to Glyndebourne opera in the Sussex countryside knows exactly what the corporate takeover of opera looks like.

It is a fantastic opera house, with challenging productions. Glyndebourne often employs radical directors like Peter Sellers, who gave an anti-war press conference in the run-up to the 15 February anti-war demos.

But the audiences are made up of City suits impressing their clients, people who would be just as happy in an executive box at a football match.

The ENO chorus are right to strike for their jobs, for their artistic freedom, to keep opera as accessible as possible, and to stop art becoming more enslaved to the corporate bullies.

by **ROB HOVEMAN**

poetry

Poets speak out against the war

AN INSPIRATIONAL evening of poetry took place on the eve of the great London demonstration against the war.

Adrian Mitchell and Michael Rosen performed the poems we print here at the packed event which took place in London.

There were also exhilarating and moving renditions from Benjamin Zephaniah, Tony Harrison, Iraqi poet Saadi Yousef, Linton Kwesi Johnson and many more.

All were united in opposition to war against Iraq. The event was organised by Poets Against the War.

To find out more, or perhaps to contribute your own poetry, e-mail poetsagainstwar@yahoo.co.uk

How shall we defeat the enemy?

We shall defeat the enemy by making alliances.

Who shall we make alliances with?

With people in whose interests it is to be enemies with the enemy.

How shall we win an alliance with these people?

We shall win an alliance with these people by giving them money and arms.

And after that?

They'll help us defeat the enemy.

Has the enemy got money and arms?

Yes.

How did the enemy get money and arms?

He was once someone in whose interests it was to be enemies with our enemy.

Which enemy was this?

Someone in whose interests it had once been to be enemies with our enemy.

Michael Rosen

To Whom It May Concern

*I was run over by the truth one day
Ever since the accident I've walked this way
So stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.*

*Heard the alarm clock screaming with pain
Couldn't find myself so I went back to sleep again
So fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.*

*Every time I shut my eyes all I see is flames
Made a marble phone book and I carved all the names
So coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.*

*I smell something burning, hope it's just my brains
They're only dropping peppermints and daisy chains
So stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.*

*Where were you at the time of the crime?
Down by the Cenotaph drinking slime
So chain my tongue with whisky
Stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.*

*You put your bombers in, you put your conscience out
You take the human being and you twist it all about
So scrub my skin with women
Chain my tongue with whisky
Stuff my nose with garlic
Coat my eyes with butter
Fill my ears with silver
Stick my legs in plaster
Tell me lies about Iraq.**

Adrian Mitchell

*Originally "Vietnam". Adrian Mitchell read his poem replacing "Vietnam" with "Iraq" when he gave a rendition at the mass anti-war rally in Hyde Park on 15 February. Introducing the poem he said, "If Tony Blair tells Britain to go to war, don't go. Don't go to work, don't go to school, don't go to college, don't go to your ship or your regiment. Take to the streets."



MILLIONS WHO marched against war on 15 February are determined to stop the US unleashing the kind of terror it did on Vietnam

REFUGEES FORCED TO STARVE, FREEZE AND SLEEP ROUGH

Tortured on the streets of Britain

THE LIE that refugees are living a life of luxury in "soft touch" Britain was exposed in the High Court last week.

Judge Justice Collins ruled that New Labour was forcing refugees to face destitution in Britain or return to the persecution they fled from.

The government introduced a law in January that means refugees could be denied any benefits or shelter if they did not apply for asylum the moment they entered Britain.

Six test cases of refugees suffering under this law were brought to the court.

They included an Iraqi Kurd who fled from Saddam Hussein's regime. He travelled to London in a lorry.

His first night of freedom in Britain was spent in "a tunnel by a telephone box".

He was refused any benefits or accommodation because the immigration authorities claimed he gave a "lack of detail" on his journey to Britain.

Another case was a woman from Rwanda who had been beaten and raped. She travelled to the immigration offices in Croydon, south London, only to be denied any support because she did not apply at the airport.

A 22 year old Angolan man had his family home raided by soldiers.

They shot his father and raped his mother and sister.

He escaped to Britain and ended up having to sleep rough outside the Croydon offices.

The judge said the decision to refuse benefits to these six refugees should be quashed.

The ruling opens the way for other refugees who have been hit by the same decision.

"To deny individuals access to food and shelter and potentially leave them to starve or freeze on Britain's streets is a degrading, humiliating and wholly unacceptable policy," said Shami Chakrabarti from the human rights organisation Liberty.

Home secretary David Blunkett was not horrified by the revelation in court that refugees are sleeping rough and going hungry.

He boasted it is a "robust policy".

The government is deliberately putting

by HELEN SHOOTER

refugees' health and welfare at risk to act as a deterrent to others.

"This measure is an important part of our asylum reform programme," he said.

Blunkett ranted about how "fed up" he was that cases uncovering the plight of refugees were winning in court.

He is planning to appeal against the ruling.

New Labour's determination to pander to the right wing press by keeping up the attack on refugees provoked an angry response from TGWU union leader Bill Morris.

Morris has been an outspoken critic of the New Labour government's anti-refugee policies. Last weekend he spoke out at the Unite Against Racism conference hosted by the TUC.

Permission

He said that communities were not "swamped" by asylum seekers.

Such language from the government gave the Nazi British National Party "a signal of permission to attack black and Asian communities".

Ministers were indulging in "cheap and nasty populism", he said.

He called on Britain to accept a fair share of the increased number of refugees who would inevitably flee Iraq if any war starts.

"As the US and Britain prepare to rain down bombs on Baghdad, it is time to ask how many displaced Iraqis will the US take? How many will Britain take?" said Morris.

Doreen Lawrence, mother of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, also laid into New Labour for abandoning a commitment to fight racism.

"The government has lost interest in race," she said.

"Almost ten years after the murder of my son I am saddened that not a lot has changed.

"The only way to deal with racism is to tackle it head on."

But New Labour is feeding racism by repeating all the racist lies about asylum seekers.

THE AUTHORITIES gave the Krauja family 30 minutes to leave their life

Bigots fanning hatred Community wants the Kraujas back

THE RIGHT wing press has eagerly reported protests in Lee-on-the-Solent, near Gosport on the south coast, against plans to put refugees in a former RAF base.

The issue has been whipped up into a frenzy by the local press and the area's Tory MP.

They are shrieking about the proposal to house up to 400 male refugees in HMS *Daedalus*, which used to house...400 airmen.

An Afghan asylum seeker was beaten to death in Southampton, which is in the same area as Lee-on-the-Solent, only two weeks ago.

The Tories have been tearing themselves apart recently.

They have never recovered from being booted out of government after 18 years of systematic attacks on working people and public services.

Now Gosport's Tory MP, Peter Viggers, is trying to shore up his political career by picking on vulnerable refugees.

The local council has also put its weight behind the anti-refugee campaign by voting to donate £5,000 to the group.

The local *Daily Echo* newspaper sponsored placards on the anti-refugee march.

The paper is part of the Newsquest group, which is the second largest publisher

of regional newspapers across Britain.

The US multinational Gannett owns it.

Gannett made \$6.4 billion in operating revenues last year.

Dump

It profits from spreading its business interests and exploiting workers across the globe.

Yet it campaigns against refugees who have been forced to leave their country because of war and persecution.

New Labour's dispersal policy has fuelled such campaigns against refugees. It wants to dump refugees in

abandoned camps instead of letting them integrate into local communities and providing extra resources.

A group of 80 local people stood up to the racism against asylum seekers, joining a rally in Gosport last Saturday.

Sarah, a local resident, spoke at the rally, saying, "We should not discriminate against asylum seekers. Most of us in the last few generations of our families have relations who came to this country.

"What sort of welcome would we have appreciated? I think if the refugees end up coming here we should organise something to show they are welcome."

Community wants the Kraujas back

"GET THE Kraujas back" is the campaign in Nottingham that is fighting to get a refugee family returned to Britain.

Local people are outraged that a family from Latvia were deported last week.

"I'd like to ask somebody why they had to go," said Dave Burton. "Everybody's really distraught. The upstairs rooms in the pub look like the *Mary Celeste*. They left so quick."

Dave Burton is the licensee of the Queen's Head pub in Watnall which Kaspars Krauja and his wife,

Sandra Krauja, had been managing.

They left Latvia in 1997 seeking political asylum in Britain. They have lived in Nottingham since then and their nine year old daughter went to a school in Watnall.

"But last Friday they were rudely awoken by the heavy knock of police and immigration officers in a dawn raid," reported the *Evening Post* local paper.

"They were given just half an hour to pack."

One pub regular said, "I went upstairs and the little girl's teddy bear was just

lying in the middle of the room. I just felt sick."

The locals are organising a fighting fund to push for the family's return.

Yet the national press has focused on reporting the campaign against a planned refugee centre at RAF Newton in West Bridgford, also in Nottinghamshire.

The people in Watnall have shown the other side of the anti-refugee hysteria.

Where refugees are allowed to integrate into local communities, work and make friends the witch-hunt atmosphere against them can be undermined.

In brief

Engineers walk out in the west

WORKERS AT an engineering factory in Hereford walked out on a seven-day strike last week.

The 400 members of the GMB union went on strike after rejecting a 1 percent pay offer with reduced overtime pay and limited sick pay.

A senior shop steward at the plant, Phil Cogzell, said, "All we want is to maintain a stable income. The offer was rejected by 82 percent."

The factory is the second biggest business in Hereford. The workforce are demanding a 3 percent rise.

Arms bosses face pensions revolt

A STRIKE could be brewing at giant arms manufacturer BAE Systems.

The company is threatening to cut retirement benefits to cover a £2.16 billion black hole in its pension scheme.

BAE Systems last week told staff they would have to increase their pension contributions by 2 percent a year to keep their membership of the final salary pension scheme.

The scheme would be closed to new workers.

BAE Systems took holidays from making pension contributions in the 1990s.

Around 12,000 workers at BAE Systems are in the TGWU union. A union official said, "The mood of our members is unmistakable. They will take industrial action to defend their pension rights."

Founding unity against the Nazis

AROUND 60 people attended a Lancaster Anti Nazi League public meeting in Lancaster Town Hall on Wednesday of last week.

Speakers from Lancaster TUC, Lancaster Refugee Support Group, Lancaster Coalition Against the War, the Green Party and Blackburn Anti Nazi League addressed the meeting.

All the speakers agreed on the need for a united campaign against the British National Party if it stands candidates in Lancaster in the forthcoming local council elections in May.

■If anyone in the Lancaster area would like more information, please e-mail lanchester.anl@talk21.com

World Bank boss gets panned

IN OXFORD over 40 people held a vibrant "cacerolazo" (a demo with pot and pan banging) outside a talk by James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank.

We did it to show solidarity with the millions of people worldwide who are suffering from the free market policies imposed by the World Bank.

MIKE COTGREAVE

No cuts at our class college

A CAMPAIGN has been launched against cuts at Ruskin College, Oxford.

The college is specially geared towards the needs of students from working class and trade union backgrounds.

The college management have announced they want £300,000 worth of cuts in the next year.

This will mean compulsory redundancies, tearing up existing contracts and moving the college from central Oxford to an industrial estate.

■Send messages of support to Ruskin College AUT, Walton St, Oxford OX1 2HE.

Arriva

Strikers beaten but not broken

THE LONGEST rail dispute in British history is over.

The RMT rail union reluctantly accepted an offer from Arriva Trains Northern for conductors and guards last week.

"The deal will still leave us the lowest paid guards of any rail company in Britain," says one union rep.

"We did not get the equal treatment with drivers we were asking for. We are going back to work beaten, but unbowed."

RMT members on Arriva sustained their campaign of one-day strikes for an incredible 13 months.

Their outstanding spirit and determination is an example to everyone. They withstood over a year of intense bullying from Arriva management.

And in recent weeks RMT members on Arriva stood by the firefighters and sent a considerable delegation to the great anti-war march.

"It was absolutely right to decide to fight back in January last year," says the RMT rep, who, like every other worker on Arriva, has been threatened with disciplinary action if he talks to the press.

"That's why there was a 90 percent vote for strikes. We faced a choice and still face a choice—do we live like slaves or do we try and have some dignity at work?"



ARRIVA STRIKERS at York station last year

"Management have thrown everything at us. They have intimidated union reps—cancelling leave for safety courses at a time when safety on the railway is of such critical concern.

"Now, in the last three weeks, they have brought in Frank Marsden as the top manager covering train crews.

"He is from South West Trains (SWT) and was slammed in an employment tribunal for his part in unfairly sacking Greg Tucker, a driver and RMT activist on SWT."

Other reps and guards are also clear that it was right to stand up to Arriva.

One, from Yorkshire, says, "They really wanted to break us. They've won over this pay battle.

"People are down. But we've shown that it wasn't easy for the company to win. And we aren't going to roll over now and accept everything.

"What we can do now depends on learning the lessons of the last year. That's important not just on Arriva, but for rail workers across the country."

A ballot on Arriva's latest offer returned a 295 to 165 vote to reject last week.

"The problem," says the Yorkshire rep, "is that a chunk of the vote to reject actually came from scabs who were looking forward to working overtime if the rest of us were on strike.

"And the biggest depot, Leeds, voted to accept. So we felt we had no choice but to accept."

The other rep says, "There is a silver lining in the Leeds vote. The people who stuck it out the longest were overwhelmingly Asian workers, mainly Pakistani. That's had a big effect on people who are not what you might call politically correct.

"Only a tiny number of people scabbed from the outset, just for the sake of it.

"But by the end people had lost so much money that many more were signing up to the company's offer.

"The key lesson is we could have won and won quickly."

KEVIN OVENDEN

This shows the limits of one-day strikes

ARRIVA WORKERS from the beginning were up against not just a multinational company, but one backed by the government through its Strategic Rail Authority.

"The government and the authority refused to fine Arriva for cancelled services," says a rep.

"That's not just services cancelled on strike days, but the hundreds lost on non-strike days when Arriva banned overtime in an attempt to starve us back to work.

"There is absolute fury with Labour MPs and the Labour Party that many of us worked hard for to get in over 18 years.

"With a handful of honourable exceptions, northern Labour MPs refused to back us. The same is true of Labour-run local councils and transport authorities."

"A lot of people are saying they will not vote Labour again. It's posed the question of a serious alternative to Labour, which will be put sharply at the RMT's conference."

A guard from Newcastle says, "The big lesson is that two one-day strikes a month or a series of one-day strikes was not enough to shift the

company.

"It rattled them at first. Then the government got behind them and Arriva was able to ride out our action.

"We should have gone for a seven-day strike at the beginning and then gone all out.

"Actually, I personally think we should have just gone all out.

"We should have told them you will not have any guards on trains until you settle with us. They would not have been able to cope."

The Yorkshire rep says, "I didn't think it at the time, but we should have quickly gone to all-out action.

"You worry because people have never been on strike before. But the last year shows they will stick with the union.

"Locally and nationally we needed to put out a clear call that we were going all out and needed support from rail workers and other groups.

"I firmly believe we would have won. And it would have been shorter than the over 30 days of one-day strikes we've called over the last year."

"This shows the limits of the one-day strike on the railways," says another rep.

The company still refuses to improve the offer of 7.3 percent, despite announcing massive profits of £1.2 billion on the day before last week's strike.

The company is also insisting that the workers increase their pension contributions by 1 percent to help make up the deficit in the pension fund.

There is a strong feeling among workers that it will take more than a strike every month to shift Peugeot.

Peugeot's profits mean the company can afford to give a decent pay rise to the lowest paid car workers in Britain and meet the shortfall in the pension fund.

GERRY JONES

what we think

Going all out is often the best way

THE BRAVE Arriva struggle holds vital lessons for every worker, not just the 4,000 guards from 15 train companies who began voting this week for strikes.

The vast majority of strikes in recent years have been restricted in advance to one or two days followed by a longer period back at work and then, possibly, another short strike.

These tactics have made gains in some areas. They can be effective in, for example, a company that is working flat out and is in fear of missing deadlines for orders.

One-day or two-day strikes can also show workers they have the collective strength to walk out together.

That happened dramatically in the one-day strikes in London's schools and by council workers nationally last year.

But it is very difficult to shift a determined employer—in either the public or private sectors—with one-day strikes.

There have been successes in the rail industry, notably on

London Underground.

But the defeat at Arriva comes after one-day strikes failed to beat South West Trains last year.

Before that a drawn-out campaign of one-day strikes by workers on the overhead cables on the railway did not break every company involved.

Winning in these circumstances requires all-out, indefinite strike action or at the very least something approaching it.

Indefinite strike action does not mean going on strike forever. It simply means walking out and not letting management know when you are going back.

That has an immediate effect on the bosses. They cannot make plans to cover for a limited period.

And such a stoppage by a significant group of workers also creates a political crisis.

In the rail industry having no trains for an extended period bites into the economy.

In areas like education, schools shut for the indefinite future becomes a far bigger

problem for the government than children sent home for one day.

It also makes it far easier for workers on strike to actively seek support and solidarity. Firefighters found that solidarity mushroomed when they were on strike, but was harder to generate when strikes were called off.

All this means that indefinite strikes can win more quickly than a drawn-out campaign of one-day strikes.

Most indefinite strikes in the 1970s lasted less than a week and won.

There is a debate among union activists about how to win a number of different disputes.

Learning from the experience of Arriva and dispelling the myths about indefinite strike action have to be part of that debate.

A one-day strike can boost workers and weaken the employers and government.

But forcing them to back down takes harder-hitting action. The most effective action is an indefinite strike.

Journalists

JOURNALISTS AT local newspapers in Bradford and Kendal were on strike last week. The journalists, who are in the NUJ union, are fighting for decent pay. The workers above struck for five days in Bradford

EWS

DRIVERS ON English Welsh and Scottish Railways (EWS) have suspended their strikes after winning a new offer from management.

It means a one-hour cut from April this year and another one-hour cut from April 2004. This will see drivers

working a 35-hour week.

Pay will rise by 3.7 percent this year and all of pay will be counted for pension purposes.

Aslef general secretary Mick Rix said, "The negotiations between Aslef and EWS have been long and difficult.

But thanks to the tremendous support and solidarity for our members' industrial action we have received an offer which we think members will find acceptable."

Drivers begin voting on the deal this week with a result expected around 20 March.

Diary Upcoming events

Friday 28 February

● Stop the war protest at Welsh Labour Party conference, 12 noon, Guildhall, Swansea. Called by Swansea Coalition Against War.

28 February-2 March

● Revolution 2003, a teach-in to build resistance to war and capitalism hosted by Socialist Worker Student Society and Spark. Phone 020 7515 2646 for details.

Saturday 1 March

● Conference to defend

public services and debate the political fund, 11am-4pm, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London. Called by London Region FBU. All FBU members and other trade unionists welcome.

● Stop the war on asylum seekers, 2.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. Organised by the Crisis Committee to Stop the Destitution of Asylum Seekers.

Monday 3 March

● Where is Labour going? Meeting, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. Speakers include Bob Crow, George Galloway MP, Mark Serwotka and John Rees.

Saturday 15 March

● Socialist Alliance annual

general meeting, London. For more details go to www.socialistalliance.net

Sunday 30 March

● Say no to locking up asylum seekers, protest 1.30pm, Dugavel removals centre, South Lanarkshire. Called by Ayrshire Friends of Refugees.

Saturday 31 May

● Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am-4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool.

4-11 July

● Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party with speakers from around the world.

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e-mail: reports@socialistworker.co.uk

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

Unison

We need these two fighters

I WAS shocked and very angry last week on hearing that Candy Udwin and Dave Carr had been expelled from the Unison union for actively opposing PFI.

We all thought the witch-hunt against leading left activists had drawn to a close, and that the worst they would face was a period of suspension.

My union branch, Camden Unison, has a long and very important history of solidarity, support and unity, and this expulsion is an attack on the type of action and fight-back that Candy and Dave stand for.

They have led and fought to defend our health service despite years of personal attacks and threats of sacking. Now they have the ultimate insult of being disciplined by



Picture: RAHUL PATEL

CANDY UDWIN receiving an award for services to the union

our union for fighting privatisation of our local hospital.

That campaign had the support of not just their members in UCL hospitals, but other trade unionists in the area and plenty of local people.

It is inconceivable that we

should accept this expulsion.

Already our branch has supported the petition for their readmission. It has so far been signed by seven Unison NEC members: Roger Banister, Raph Parkinson, Mark New, Doug Wright, John Owen, Kevin O'Brien and

Yunus Bakhsh.

PHOEBE WATKINS

■ A new factsheet is now available. Contact the campaign at 54A Darnley Road, London E9 6QH. E-mail candyanddave@hotmail.com or phone 07946 480 261.

Southampton council

SOME 2,000 members of the Unison union at Southampton council struck on Wednesday last week against plans to axe 120 jobs.

The Labour-controlled council is making the cuts to make up for the loss of £7 million in grants from central government.

Councillors faced a lively lobby and protest as they

arrived at their meeting to discuss the cuts.

The strike was solid, with libraries and housing offices shut, social services disrupted and every section on strike.

The council is not only sacking workers. It is also putting up council tax by 19 percent.

Council workers are discussing further action.

London allowance

OVER 1,000 Unison union members in London are due to start a week's strike action next Monday, 3 March.

The action will mainly involve support staff in schools in around 13 of the 32 London boroughs. It is part of the continuing campaign to win an increase in the London weighting allowance.

The councils, backed by the government, are digging their heels in.

The action planned next week shows there is still a feeling to fight to win decent pay.

On Tuesday of this week a meeting of representatives from London council Unison branches was due to hear proposals for further action.

Scottish Socialist Party

For a different war

"WE ARE an anti-war and a pro-war party. We are opposed, under any circumstances, to the unleashing of mass murder on the innocent civilians of Iraq."

"But we are also committed to a war—a war on poverty and inequality."

In his keynote speech Tommy Sheridan summed up the two key issues that dominated the Scottish Socialist Party's (SSP) annual conference held in Glasgow last weekend.

He also sent journalists from newspapers like the *Daily Mail* scurrying when he said, "Our message to asylum seekers, whether seeking asylum from torture, persecution, hunger or poverty, is come to Scotland and build your new life here."

The most exciting debate of the conference was the question of the war against Iraq.

The SSP has played a key role in building the anti-war movement and the 100,000-strong demonstration in Glasgow on 15 February.

This clearly lifted the conference. A number of delegates talked about organising strikes and mass action if war breaks out.

Sadly an amendment was passed which equated the might of US imperialism with those who participate in acts of individual terrorism as a method of fighting back.

When it came to the election manifesto for the Scottish Parliament coming up in May, delegates voted for six key pledges:

- Abolition of the council tax in favour of a new Scottish Service Tax based on income.
- Free school meals for every

state school pupil in Scotland.

● A £7.32 an hour minimum wage for all Scottish public sector workers.

● Create 24,000 jobs by introducing a 35-hour maximum working week across the public sector.

● End PFI and clear the private profiteers out of Scotland's public services.

● Oppose and obstruct any war for oil.

In recognition of the hard work members of the Socialist Worker Platform has done inside the SSP and its work inside the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements, four of its members were elected to the 14-strong executive committee of the SSP.

Also nearly 100 delegates attended the Socialist Worker Platform fringe meeting.

Socialist Alliance

FIREFIGHTER SYD Platt received nearly 5 percent of the vote for the Socialist Alliance in a council by-election in the Haverstock ward in Camden, north London, last week.

The Labour vote collapsed in what was previously a solid Labour area.

The main beneficiaries were the Liberals, who won the seat from Labour with 746 votes.

The Socialist Alliance, arguing for a genuine socialist alternative to Labour, got 84 votes, a credible 4.8 percent.

PCS

Set clear priorities

ACTIVISTS IN the PCS civil servants' union from the Left Unity group were to meet in Birmingham on Saturday.

They will know the result of the membership ballot for more democracy in the union.

If members have voted for annual national executive elections those elections will take place almost immediately. Members were also voting on holding annual conferences.

The meeting will decide on the left candidates for the election and whether there should be an alliance with a new grouping which has recently split from the right wing in the union.

This new group, calling itself the PCS Democrats, stood out against the attempted coup last year against the elected general secretary, Mark Serwotka.

This alliance has the potential to be very good for the union, but the PCS Democrats must make clear where they stand on a number of important issues.

These include the war on Iraq, privatisation, the fight to regain national pay bargaining, and preventing the introduction of a two-tier workforce.

MARTIN JOHN, PCS branch secretary, DWP headquarters, Sheffield

A student teach-in to build the resistance to capitalism and war



28 February to 2 March, LSE, central London

SPEAKERS include

George Galloway MP

Linda Smith London Region FBU

Federico Tommasiello NEC Giovani Comunista

Helen Salmon NUS NEC member

Asad Rehman ESF Coordinating Group

Lindsey German Stop the War Coalition

Jonathan Neale author *The American War: Vietnam 1960-1975*

Alex Callinicos author *Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*

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Uprising rocks Bolivia

Bush's ally forced to flee his presidential palace

PROTESTERS BURN furniture from the vice-president's building

Picture: PA PHOTOS/EPA

ONE OF George Bush's staunchest allies in Latin America had to flee his presidential palace in the Bolivian capital, La Paz, last week.

Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, the multimillionaire businessman president, escaped hidden in the back of an ambulance as government buildings in the capital burned.

Outside the palace people and police were fighting — on the same side against troops sent to quell a mass rebellion against poverty.

There were mass demonstrations and riots in La Paz and other key cities.

A 48-hour general strike was called by the Bolivian Labour Federation.

Even the police went on strike.

"The crisis has reached such a point that the guard dogs of the state have turned against it," said Puca Wara, a socialist in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz.

In La Paz striking police and ordinary people fought running battles against troops, who shot at least 32 people dead.

Sanchez de Lozada has, for now, survived in office.

But he has had to withdraw

the tax rises and cuts that sparked the protests, promise wage rises to many groups, and sack his entire cabinet.

The tax rises had been demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its backers in the US White House.

They wanted ordinary Bolivians to pay so international bankers would continue to get interest on Bolivia's crushing debt burden.

The rebellion in Bolivia is a severe blow to the US.

The US *Washington Post* paper reports, "The country has become Washington's virtual standard bearer" in Latin America.

Spark

"Prior to last week's events, the Bolivian government had been the true believer of Washington's free market gospel."

The spark for rebellion was a government plan to freeze workers' salaries and impose a 12.5 increase in income tax.

The Associated Press agency reported how in the capital, "Word of the new tax spread quickly. Labourers and peasants expressed outrage. Shop owners simmered with anger.

"Soon, students in school uniform and taxi drivers took to the streets. Furious policemen

then walked off their jobs to join demonstrators."

People targeted, and set fire to, government buildings. The rebellion quickly spread to other key cities such as Santa Cruz and Cochabamba.

An eyewitness in Cochabamba described how "the city is shut down. The television blares images of police tear-gassing blockades on street corners only a few blocks away. You can hear the chants of protesters demanding their rights.

"Yesterday in the main square speakers with microphones called for all segments of Bolivian society to join together in the fight against government-induced poverty.

"The majority of the people support the mobilisation to protest against the efforts of their government and outside forces to deepen the devastating economic crisis that has left Bolivia the poorest country in South America.

"The decision to take to the streets is the only choice that many have left."

The government measures threatened to plunge even more Bolivians into poverty.

Years of IMF-backed neo-liberal policies have left over 60 percent of Bolivia's eight million people living on less than \$2 a day.

And, despite slavishly following IMF plans, the debt burden is crushing Bolivia's poor.

Sanchez de Lozada was economy minister in the 1980s when Bolivia's crucial tin industry was all but wiped out.

That and the devastation of other industries has pushed more and more people to try and scratch a living in the countryside.

Many have turned to growing coca plants. Coca leaves are a traditional mild stimulant chewed by many people in the high altitudes of Bolivia.

Some coca production has been used as the raw material for production of the drug cocaine.

But the government, backed by the US, has been waging war on all coca production, threatening to reduce even more people to destitution.

This has fuelled mass protests by coca growers. One of the growers' leaders, Evo Morales, has become a key opposition figure and was at the centre of last week's protests. Morales only narrowly lost the presidential election last year.

The US has poured military aid into Bolivia under the cover of a "war on drugs".

George Bush hopes to establish three major new military bases in Bolivia to project US power in a strategically vital region.

The region is home to vital

oil and gas supplies, above all in Venezuela and Colombia. Bolivia itself has some of the world's biggest reserves of natural gas.

President Sanchez de Lozada has made deals to exploit these reserves with companies including the now discredited Enron corporation as well as BP, Shell, British Gas, France's TotalFinaElf and Spain's Repsol.

The rebellion in Bolivia has left Sanchez de Lozada hugely weakened, has terrified global corporations and badly rattled George Bush.

It shows how popular anger can explode and challenge the priorities of those at the top of the global system.

Spanish axis also hit by mass protests

SPAIN'S RIGHT wing prime minister was rocked by another huge demonstration in the capital, Madrid, on Sunday.

At least half a million people marched angrily through the streets condemning the government for its handling of the *Prestige* oil tanker disaster.

The demonstration came a week after one in ten of Spain's population joined huge anti-war marches.

The different issues are

coming together into a general revolt against prime minister Jose Maria Aznar.

The *Prestige* oil tanker sank off the coast of the Spanish province Galicia last November.

It broke in two and spilled oil onto the coast, devastating the local coastline and fishing industry.

The Spanish authorities told the tanker to go out to sea, denying that there was any risk.

When disaster struck, the government did little to combat

it. Some have accused the government of sabotaging those who tried to contain the damage.

The wreck of the tanker still continues to leak oil.

Sunday's protest came on the very day that Aznar was meeting George Bush to discuss plans for war on Iraq.

Many on Sunday's march wore anti-war badges and stickers. One popular slogan was, "Aznar, If you want oil go to Galicia!"

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